

Chronicles of a Meadow

by Purplerose128

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Summary: [Fem!Hiccup/Jack] Jack's boring job at the public library is interrupted by a new face coming in to check out a book. And once Hiccup Haddock walks into his life, Jack learns that even romance novels aren't all sunshine and rainbows. From anxious nerves to life's unpredictability, Jack learns that his adventures with Hiccup are made up of much more than fluff.

1. Idle Introductions

**So... this is what happens when I get inspiration on about three hours of sleep. **

I felt like writing something with Fem!Hiccup in it and this happened in less than an hour... that I could have spent on an ongoing fanfic that I still need to update...

Oh well, I figured I'd share this little thing with you guys. Might as well, right? I'm not sure if I'll continue this or not. You can tell me if I should in the reviews. But, if I do, it'll be when one of my ongoing projects is done or almost done. I don't want to juggle too many stories at once or one will surely be forgotten and will never be updated (which has already happened to one of mine this year...)

I hope you like this!

* * *

><p>Jack had never been too keen on his job working in the library. He really only got up and went to work every day because he had to. It was a job that he was, admittedly, grateful to have. It sure helped out his mother when it came to paying the bills and Jack even got to keep some for his own leisure.<p>

But that didn't change the fact that he kind of loathed every day that inched by with this boring occupation. Every day, the boy with white hair sauntered into the building at 3:35, right after school, and would stay in the house of books until 8:45. For the most part, he just manned the desk; taking care of book transactions. When it was quiet (and he actually felt like it) he would do his homework right there at the front desk. Why not, right? His boss couldn't yell at him for being swamped with schoolwork and tackling it when nothing was going on. But more often than not Jack would spend his free time goofing off on the computer set up right in front of him; mocking him while he was forced to exertion he didn't want to succumb to.

Though, there was one thing in particular that Jack liked about this part of his job. He wasn't much of a reader himself, but he picked up a few things after five months of shelving books. He learned every title and what genre it belonged to; sometimes he read the summary or the first few chapters when no one was looking. His personal favorites were (sadly) the comics and children's books. Probably because Jack had a child-like imagination that he wasn't outgrowing anytime soon.

And, from these excursions, yielded an ability that the boy was beginning to grow quite fond of. Just from the books that each customer took out, Jack could see something about them from the title that they chose. He could see battles waging for justice inside the history buffs, the enchanted realms of fantasy within its rather diverse fan base and the illusions swirling in every mystery fan. Jack was never that shallow, but this job started to draw him to a person's eyes first. It justâ€¦ felt natural to him. Eyes tell more stories than can ever be told; the things they've seen of joy, wonder, heartbreakâ€¦ if someone would only stop and notice these tales beyond those gates to the real person contained by the limits of a body. This part is what kept dragging Jack to work every day.

And there's one set of eyes that Jackson Overland would never forget. Her eyes were the green of a spring meadow in its prime, the blades of the grass fidgeting slightly as they stared back at him. And, enveloping that meadow was a blazing ember of bright hazel that just barely flickered in contrast to the green. She clutched her book of choice to her chest, gripping tightly with both hands.

For a moment, Jack couldn't speak. He wanted to explore those fields some more, to see what made those hazel ridges shine like they did. But his stare was cast away by the sound of her voice. "Uhâ€¦ you ok?" It was deeper than Jack originally anticipated, for a girl that is andâ€¦ careful. Almost like she didn't want to bother the idiot who was staring right at her (great call, Jack) out of some fear.

Jack shook his head "Oh, sorry, umâ€¦" he scratched the back of his neck "I zoned out for a minute."

A little smirk crept onto her face "Maybe you should do that off the clock." Sarcasm, greatâ€¦

"I'll work on that." Jack took the book that she placed on the counter and stared at the cover in a bit of awe. She had How to Train Your Dragon in her hands! This is one of the stories Jack

actually took time to skim through! I guess Jack wasn't the only teenager in the world who loved the misadventures of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third after all. He smiled at her "Really?"

The girl reverted her gaze, allowing auburn bangs to obscure Jack's view of the springtime in her eyes. Strange how her hair was almost the same color as her freckles. "Yeah. I know it's stupid but--"

"Not at all." Jack interrupted, regaining full sight of the green. "I didn't think anyone else my age read these books."

"You like them too?"

"I've read the whole set, up to date." Jack proclaimed "Or, at least, skimmed them. I know what happened in each book, anyway." He chuckled.

Another smile was painted on her face. This one was warm, genuine. It only made those embers burn brighter. "Cool."

She handed him her library card. Henrika Haddock it read. His girl was definitely new around here. For one, Jack would remember a name as foreign to him as Henrika. But there was no way he would forget those eyes.

"Henrika?" Jack asked.

"Don't ask." She quickly ordered "It's kind of a long story."

"Okay then." Jack registered the book's take out and flipped to the back page, holding the book's history. He scribbled down a date on the next available line "Have it back here for return or renewal by this date, ok?" He scratched down something on a sticky note and stuck it to the card. He then closed the book and passed it and her card back to her.

"No problem." She took the book back in her hands and opened to the last page. The meadows grew larger at what she saw with the card. On the note was a roughly scrawled Jack and a phone number.

"Why don't you call me sometime, Henrika?" He gave his trademark smirk; the one that got all the ladies.

Henrika looked from the note to him and closed the book again. "Call me Hiccup." She smiled, revealing acutely crooked teeth held by braces Jack hadn't noticed until then, and strode out the door. Jack watched until her form was out of sight. Something told him that working at the library wouldn't be all that boring anymore.

2. Getting a Grasp

So this updated faster than I thought... I guess you guys can thank writer's block on another one of my stories for this. Well, that and the fact that I couldn't get this chapter out of my head until just about now... This is where POV will start to alternate between Jack and Hiccup, so have fun with that.

**Thanks for all of the favs/follows/reviews that the first chapter got. I didn't expect anyone to actually like this so I'm pretty happy. I hope you guys can figure out who the newly introduced characters in this chapter are. I think they're both pretty obvious, but if you're confused I'll clarify in a PM or something. **

**And, I've said this on my other fics, but I'm also reachable on Tumblr. My URL is the same as on here, Purplerose128. Go check out my blog if you want to. **

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><p>A week had passed since the white haired library assistant first met the Henrika- correction, Hiccup. Honestly, Jack didn't really see a need for her to have a nickname; he thought her name was really interesting and  pretty. It confused him from the moment she stated it and left before he could give a response to her request to call her as such. Even more, still, that her nickname of choice was the same as the main character of the book she'd checked out the previous Thursday. There must have been some kind of story behind her using the name of a fictional Viking hero instead of her own.<p>

Jack was certain that he'd find out more about Hiccup the next time he'd see her. That brief exchange they had shared was nothing compared to the enthusiasm in her meadow irises and the crooked smile that winked onto her face in waves of joy. This girl had so much more to talk about and Jack was determined to hear even just a fragment more. She really seemed like a person that's fun to talk to, no matter the subject.

Unfortunately, he still hadn't seen or heard from her in that whole seven days of staring down at his cell phone and waiting for a new number to appear; just so that he could pick it up can talk to her some more. Jack tried to stay optimistic about this fact. Maybe she was just really busy and didn't have a chance to call yet. Maybe she was so into the book that she forgot entirely and would be reminded when she turned the last page and saw his phone number waiting for her.

But the passing days made it harder to stay that way. Jack started to think that she wasn't interested and didn't want to break it to him, so she was avoiding the library and, therefore, avoiding him. But he couldn't really blame her. It is kind of weird for someone that you never met before to practically throw their phone number at you. He had come off the wrong way or something. That's why she didn't try to even call him.

Then, that seventh day, all of that worry disappeared. Hiccup walked through the doors about an hour after Jack had started his shift. And the first thing she did was come up to the counter and smile at him, braces showing obscurely. Jack thought it must have been those things that kept her from smiling any bigger.

"Hi, Jack." She greeted.

"Hey, Hiccup." Jack answered "I was starting to think you forgot about the place or something."

Hiccup giggled "No, I just couldn't get a ride. Stuff's been a little

crazy at home this week." She adjusted the strap of her shoulder bag, making a few of the key chains cling together. "Oh." "She opened the bag and pulled out the book she borrowed from it "I finished it."

She handed it to Jack, who gingerly took it. "How'd you like it?"

"It was adorable. I really like Hiccup."

"That makes two of us." Jack chuckled. He took the book and put it on a nearby cart before registering that it was returned.

Jack was about to ask her about her nickname before another voice uttered it. "Hiccup!" A loud, almost squeaky whisper sounded.

Hiccup turned to the source of the voice and smiled a little wider "Hey, Felix."

Jack's eyes widened _Felixâ€|?_

A boy that was bigger than Jack in both the height and weight categories waddled into view. He had messy blond hair and a backpack slung over his shoulders that looked like it would burst any second from being over-filled. "What's up?" He asked her.

"Just returning a book." Hiccup replied "Felix, this is my new friend Jack. Jack, this is Felix." Felix casually waved and Jack nodded. "Well, I came here to study so I'm going to do that." She stated and walked towards an empty table. She sat and sifted through her bag until she found the notebook that she was looking for. Jack could see from where he was that it had been drawn on all over.

Felix watched her for a moment before following suit and sitting across from her, taking out some of his own school books. If there was one way for Jack to describe how that kid walked, he would say that kid walked like a fish that just grew a set of legs. The way he carried himself seemed to be on a high-strung end, either like he had too much energy and no way to let it out or that he was just nervous about something.

Jack carried on with his work, taking care of transactions and restocking books, but every few minutes his eyes would gravitate towards Hiccup's table. He was looking for something, anything that would tell him exactly what their relationship was. Were they friends? Was he her tutor or something? Or were they dating?

That last one would explain why she didn't call and tried to keep their recent conversation brief. Butâ€| their behavior wasn't adding up to that theory. For the most part, they kept to themselves and only made any form of contact when one of them had a question about whatever it was that they were working on. Once or twice, they carried on a conversation but they didn't last very long and fell victim to their studies. Since Jack was having a problem pegging their relationship, he just left it at friends. But it bothered him that he wasn't sure of it.

Though, there was one thing that eased his mind some. On one of the runs to return the returned books to their shelves, Jack once again came upon _How to Train Your Dragon_ and flipped to the back cover.

When he did, the only thing that he saw was the list of previous borrowers and check-out dates. His phone number was absent. That meant one of two things. Either she threw it away or she took it out and kept it somewhere for later.

Would it be bad to say that Jack was relieved when Felix was packing up his books? But, hey, this meant that maybe he could finally talk to Hiccup some more without any outside interference. If the guy had to go for that to happen, so be it.

Hiccup seemed neutral about her friend leaving, offering him a miniscule smile and a feeble wave goodbye before staring back down at her notes and nibbling at the end of her chewed pan cap.

A few minutes after her study partner left, Hiccup walked up to the desk with How to be a Pirate, the second book of the young Viking hero's books. Jack checked it out for her and she slipped it inside of her bag.

"Hooked on the series now, Hiccup?" Jack smirked.

"Yeahâ€|" She bounced slightly on the balls of her feet "I think you have someone to talk about them with now."

"Soâ€|" Jack played with the frayed end of his blue hoodie "does that mean you're staying?" He made the observation that the table she was sitting at was now cleared; all of the stuff that littered it was probably all back in her bag.

"No, I can't." Hiccup sighed sadly "My brother's here to pick me up."

Jack froze with a blank stare "You have a brother?"

"Yeah." Hiccup shrugged "I shouldn't keep him waiting either. If he gets too bored, he might ditch me." She walked towards the door "I'll see you later, Jack."

* * *

><p>Hiccup exited the library and scanned the sides of the street until her eyes met a familiar red truck with black pin striping along the sides, not that she couldn't hear her brother's obnoxious music blasting from the old thing's stereo.<p>

Hiccup approached the vehicle to see the too familiar sight of her driver with his feet kicked up on the aging dashboard and passionately playing the air guitar. His head banging to the beat ruffled his usually stationary, wiry brown hair. She rolled her eyes and opened the passenger door to climb in, which went unnoticed.

"Scott!" She shouted, closing the door behind her.

Upon hearing the disturbance, Scott jumped and banged his arm against his window. He grumbled something under his breath and started rubbing it. "Ugh, Henrikaâ€|" he muttered "I could have broken her window."

"I'm so sorry that I almost gave your precious car another ding."

She sarcastically apologized.

"Whatever." Scott scoffed as he put the truck in gear and started their trip home "What were you doing here, anyway? Dad only said to come get you."

"I did some studying with Felix and got another book." Hiccup stated.

"Just Felix? No Astrid this time?" Interest was suddenly in Scott's voice.

"She couldn't come." Hiccup responded "The girls had lacrosse practice today." She looked over at her brother "Why?"

"You know why." Scott claimed.

"Dude, I've told you before, she's not into you." Hiccup proclaimed.

"Well how do I know that until I try?"

"She told me so." Hiccup pretended to be interested in her overly bitten fingernails "She caught onto your little crush months ago."

"You're lying." Scott declared.

"It's the truth, Snot Face."

Scott groaned "Yeah, yeah" Hiccup." He smirked. There was a pause before it faded back into a little scowl "Ugh, we have to stop doing that. What if those names stick for life?"

"Oh, they will." Hiccup teased "Even if we live on opposite ends of the world, I'll call your house and when you don't pick up, I'll leave a message for 'Snot Face' to call me."

"Please don't." Scott chuckled "I don't want to explain that to people."

"You already have to your friends; why does it matter?" Hiccup smirked.

"Fine, you win." Scott sighed as they pulled into the driveway "But only because we're home."

"You might win a round if you didn't just break half of the traffic rules to get home." Hiccup informed as she climbed out of the car.

Scott exited as well "You interrupted something very important, I'll have you know."

"Oh yeah?" Hiccup crossed her arms "What was so 'important?'"

"Fireworm needs to be waxed." Scott gestured to his truck "I mean, look at her."

Hiccup glanced at the car and back at her brother "Scott, the thing is ten years old and it's starting to fall apart."

"Don't listen to her!" Scott whispered, behind a cupped hand, to the truck. "Don't you have something else to do?" He spat at Hiccup before trudging into the garage. Not even ten seconds after he disappeared inside, the same loud music started blasting from yet another stereo of his.

Hiccup rolled her eyes at her brother's usual stupidity. She then sauntered to the front door. "I'm home!" She called as she opened the door and stepped inside.

Not a second later, large footsteps emanated through the ceiling. Hiccup looked down the hallway and watched a monstrosously sized Great Dane speed towards her, bounding down the stairs with a deep bark.

"Hey, Toothless!" She cooed as she knelt down and nuzzled the dog's head to her own. She stroked his coarse black fur, right behind the ear "Did you miss me? Huh, bud?" She giggled when a giant tongue slid across her cheeks.

"Henrika?" A woman's voice questioned. Upon hearing it, Hiccup stood and walked down the hallway with Toothless in tow. She turned the corner and found the owner of the voice entering through the back door. It was her mother, Val. "Oh, there you are. I wasn't sure if you were home yet."

"You mean you didn't hear Scott start blasting his music from the garage?" She chuckled.

Val joined in on the acute laughter. "So, how was the library today?" She asked as she and Hiccup wandered over to the kitchen table and sat down.

"It was alright." Hiccup shrugged "I met up with Felix and we studied together for a few hours." Val nodded "Then I checked out another book and I left with Scott."

"Nothing else new?" Val rested her chin in one of her hands. Hiccup moved her hands like two sides of a balancing scale. "Really?" Hiccup nodded, leading Val to reach into her pocket for something "Then who's Jack?" she implored as she took the sticky note with Jack's number and placed it on the table.

Hiccup's shoulders sank with a quiet huff. "I was hoping you wouldn't find that!" she ran a hand through her somewhat tangled hair "Jack works there- at the library. We started talking about the book I checked out last week and he wrote down his phone number."

"And how old is this 'Jack?'" her mother inched closer.

She shrugged "About my age." She guessed "Maybe a bit older? I didn't really ask."

"Have you talked at all since he gave this to you?" Val tapped the paper with her index finger.

"He was there again today and we talked for a bit." She made a small

smile "But then Scott showed up and I left."

"Have you called him yet?" Now some real interest was coming into the older woman's voice.

"No." Hiccup dryly replied "I've been too busy."

Val passed her the note "Maybe you should soon. Even if you'd rather be friends, you should tell him that."

Hiccup took the note "I guessâ€|"

Val stood and patted her daughter's shoulder "That's my girl. You're free to go now."

Hiccup breathed a sigh of relief and retreated to her room upstairs. She threw her bag off of her shoulder and it landed by her bed with a quite audible thunk. She proceeded towards her bed and landed on it face first. She moaned into the sheets before rolling over, Toothless hopping up and lying down next to his favorite human. He rested his giant head over her chest, which she almost immediately started scratching in his favorite spot.

"What do you think Toothless?" She mused as she stared at smooth white ceiling "Should I call him?"

3. Friendly Feedback

****Chapter 3 done, yes! ****

****I'm glad I got this chapter out this week because next week I won't be here to update anything, most likely. I'm going to Florida for a week starting Friday, so I'm doing my best to update as many of my ongoing stories as I can before then. I hope it compensates for my week of absence. ****

****This chapter focuses on Jack's home life, kind of like how I did Hiccup's last chapter. I hope you like this one, guys.****

*** * ***

><p>After Hiccup left, the remainder of Jack's shift was pretty dullâ€| and annoying. Not that he took that much joy in spying on her and Felix, whoever he was to her, while they were here. The boy with bleached hair finally had a chance to sit down at the counter and do some homework, since business became slow, but then the boss just had to come out and find something else for Jack to do.

Jack's boss, Harry, was a tall, lanky old man with a beard that seemed to get whiter every day. He walked around the library every now and then throughout the day, as if to make sure no one made off with any of the books. And every time he took this stroll, he would ask Jack for the list of checked out books, go over it and then slip back into his office around the corner. Jack quickly learned not to say anything to him unless he was spoken to, but he knows one word to describe his employer: scary.

"Overland," Harry's voice uttered in its usual hushed rasp "the

science fiction section is a mess. Go clean it up." He ordered before retreating to his office again. Once he was out of his boss' ear shot, Jack huffed and bounced to his feet.

So, Jack spent until a half hour after his shift was supposed to be over re-organizing the sci-fi section of the shelving. It wouldn't have taken so long if he hadn't fallen off of the step ladder and nearly brought the shelf down with him, gravity taking the books that were already back inside of it. Other than that little spill (thank God that Harry didn't seem to hear it or he would have flipped) this activity was rather droll. But hey, how much fun could stacking books possibly be? Especially after doing it twice.

Long story short, Jack couldn't wait to hop in his car and get home. Even Harry had left by then, so Jack had to lock up before he went his way again. _Why am I always the last to leave?_ He internally moaned when he finally locked every door in the building, got in his car (the only one left in the parking lot) and drove home.

* * *

><p>The very moment Jack walked through the front door, he was greeted by the warm yet worried eyes of his older sister. "Jack!" She engulfed him in a tight embrace, causing him to drop his backpack.<p>

"Anna!" Jack choked "I can't breathe." She let go and Jack gasped for air "What was that about?" he chuckled as he tore off his hoodie, revealing a plain blue t-shirt.

"You're home late again." She complained "You know how mom is about curfew." She moved a few rainbow colored locks of hair behind her ear "You're lucky you beat her home."

Jack sighed "I know, but Harry held me up for something again. I swear my life would be easier if she would just bump curfew up a half an hour."

"You and I both know the likelihood of that happening." She giggled. Walking into the kitchen, she called "There's still some leftovers from dinner, if you want them. I bet you're starved."

"Only a little." Jack joked. He followed his sister through the doorway and found a plate already made up for him, waiting for him to help himself to it on the table. "You're the best, Anna."

She smiled "I know. Now eat something." She walked to the doorway and turned back to her brother "And remember to brush your teeth when you're done." Then, she strode upstairs.

Jack chuckled at the last part, but happily complied and sat down to eat his long awaited meal. _Typical Anna,_ Jack mused._ He heartily gulped down every morsel of the chicken and mashed potatoes provided to him; he clearly didn't realize how hungry he was until the first bite entered his mouth. After pretty much licking the plate clean, Jack trudged up the flight of stairs and turned the corner into his bedroom. He plopped into his desk chair and finally set to work on his homework, without distractions.

Without distractions, that is, until he heard a familiar voice call

out "I'm home!"

_Yes you are, mom. _Jack smiled _Good thing you're not the only one who was late tonight._

It wasn't long before the unofficial head of the Overland house poked into the doorway of her son's room and greeted him. Jack turned to face her, smile on his face. "How was work today?" She casually asked. Jack's head fell back and he let out a moan "Come on, it can't be that bad." She tried to hold back a laugh.

"I'm just tired." He clasped the bridge of his nose and sighed.

"I take it you couldn't do your assignments at work today, huh?"

"You have no idea." Jack groaned.

His mother smiled "I'll leave you to that, then. Don't stay up too late, Jack."

"No promises." He replied before she disappeared behind the wall.

Jack continued his work for about an hour after that and decided to take a quick break. As usual, the house was still very much alive at so close to eleven o'clock at night. With his parents' wonky work hours, especially when his dad wasn't away on business, the family was often awake past midnight; it was the only time they could find to be together and they took it in stride. Anna had now made a habit of staying up past then nightly, seeing as she had mountains of homework herself from dental school. So, he decided to try to sneak into her bedroom and bug her for a little while. This act didn't go unnoticed though, as her pet bird started to sound an alert to her master the second Jack's foot came into her sight.

Anna turned from her pile of books and hushed the brightly colored parakeet before acknowledging him "What do you want, Jack?" She interrogated "I'm really busy right now."

Jack smirked "What? I can't take a break from my homework to watch my big sister do her homework?"

Anna rolled her eyes "Whatever." She scratched down another answer on her paper "You and your friends have any plans this weekend?"

"Nah." Jack sighed "Jamie has to watch his sister, the girls are having one of their days and Claude and Caleb are going to visit family."

"Great," Anna muttered "So that means you'll be bothering me all weekend, right?"

"You just read my mind." Jack exclaimed. He mulled over the statement "Wait, why is that a problem? You usually don't care."

"I have a project to work on and I'd really appreciate it if I can concentrate on that." Anna explained "So, if you must entertain yourself by bugging me, please do it sparingly."

"I'll do my best." The two sat in a silence for a few minutes before Jack's pocket light up with the glow of this cell phone. He took it out and the screen showed an unknown number. "I have to take this." He stated as he speed walked back to his own room and stared at the number. He took a breath and answered "Hello?"

"Jackâ€|?" His eyes widened at the jittery tone "It's, uhâ€| It's Hiccupâ€|"

"Hey," Jack tried to mask his excitement "what's up? I didn't expect you to call this late."

"I'm not keeping you up, am I?"

"No, I'm always up at this hour." Jack replied.

"Good." Hiccup's voice began to relax "So am I."

"Well, alright." The tension on Jack faded too "Now answer my first question."

Hiccup giggled "I just finished up my homework and I thought I'd finally put your number to use. Sorry it took me awhile; life's kind of hectic over here."

"It's fine. At least now I know I didn't creep you out or anything."

"How do you know that?" Hiccup intrigued.

"Why would you call someone who you thought was a total creep?" Jack playfully asked.

"To tell him what a creep he is, obviously." Hiccup countered.

Jack chuckled "You got me there." He paused "Wait, then he would just have your number and he'd just harass you even more."

The two carried on with their very witty and sarcastic conversation for close to an hour before Hiccup's ever more frequent yawns finally called her to sleep. They hung up after Hiccup promised that they would talk again, either over the phone or at the library. Jack's smile stayed plastered on his face as he stared down at his cell phone. He found that he really liked talking to Hiccup. She always had something to say and she was so funny and smart and she always had a comeback to whatever joke that Jack tossed at her.

There was the fire in those meadow green eyes; there was the spark that he saw in them. Once she was comfortable, the shy barrier she had put up collapsed with every word she spoke, every laugh that left her lips, every smile that he knew that he made her crack during that conversation. If only he could have been sitting across from her while they talked, so that he could see that fire ignite the meadows and give them so much more life than even Hiccup knew that they had. Those eyes revealed so much more about her than she knew. Those little blazes in her irises are what caught Jack's attention and he planned on keeping it on her for as long as he could.

"So, who were you talking to?"

Anna's voice made Jack jump in his seat "No one you need to know about right now."

"Was it a girl?" She pressed forward as she sat on the foot of Jack's bed "Sure sounded like one to me." Jack gave her a confused look "I'm pretty sure you can thank your maxed out volume for me hearing her." She crossed her arms and smirked "What's her name?"

Jack leaned back in his chair and sighed. "Henrika."

Anna nodded "Where'd you meet her?"

"At the library." Jack answered "She took out a book and we started talking about it and I gave her my number."

Anna thought about her next move. "Is she pretty?" A very mundane question, yes, but she had to hear his answer.

Jack ran a hand through his bleached white hair. "Very." Anna leaned forward, searching for details. Jack sighed again. "She's short-well, shorter than me. She looks like she's covered in frecklesâ€| they look like they're as brown as her hairâ€| and she has really green eyes, like grass."

Anna rested her chin in her palm. "Hmmâ€|" She looked over his expression while he talked and noticed a light daze in his eyes. Her smirk softened to a smile. "You like her, don't you?"

"Yeah, I like talking to her." Jack began to twiddle his thumbs "But we haven't really known each other that long yet, soâ€|" he trailed off.

"You want to get to know her first." Anna finished.

Jack nodded. "Nowâ€| can we keep this between us? I don't want mom or dad freaking out because of this. And don't tell Emma-"

"Don't tell me what?" Anna and Jack turned to the doorway to see their younger sister standing there with her arms crossed.

"Nothing!" Jack quickly spat out.

"I know it's not nothing." Emma stated "What's going on?" She glanced at Anna for some kind of confirmation.

The eldest Overland started twirling a deep brown lock of hair "Jack likes a girl and he wants to keep it secret from mom and dad until he learns more about her." Emma smiled.

Jack groaned into his hands. "Why'd you tell her?"

"Stop being a baby;" Anna swatted at him "she was going to find out anyway." She turned back to her younger sister "You wouldn't mind keeping that secret, would you?"

The younger girl excitedly nodded, her smile growing. "It's about time, Jack." She cheered "I was starting to think I'd be the first one to date around here."

"I've gone on date before, you know!" Anna protested.

"Yeah, but there was never a second date and we never got to meet either of them." Emma affirmed.

"Well, who says Jack's going to get a second date?" Anna counteracted.

"Whose side are you on here?" Jack exclaimed.

"Relax, Jack," Anna put a reassuring hand on his shoulder "If you ever need help with this, we're here for you." Jack smiled at her and she returned the gesture.

"Yeah." Emma interjected "I want to meet her. I mean, she must have something if Jack I'll-Never-Find-Love Overland has interest in her." Jack stuck out his tongue at her and she answered with showing him her own.

"So mature, you two!" Anna rolled her eyes.

4. Sprouting Suspicions

I'm finally back! Sorry about the wait for this update. I wound up having to rewrite the whole thing because the original chapter made everything too intense too fast. I saved it for later, though. So at least I didn't waste my time, right?

Also, I apologize that nothing major really happens in this chapter. It's mostly just conversation from both Jack and Hiccup's side of things and their friends getting in their faces about it... But I hope you still like it. More character introductions and stuff, so... yeah...

* * *

><p>"Wait, wait, wait." Jamie had to clarify what he'd just heard "You're saying that you actually have your eyes on a girl?" The rest of the group at the lunch table turned to Jack, waiting for an answer.<p>

"Why does no one believe this?" Jack protested "First my sisters, now you guys?" He pouted "I'm starting to feel like I should have kept this to myself."

"Don't be like that, Jack." Pippa chimed "It's just a little weird, you know?"

"You've just never been into a girl before." Cupcake added.

"Yeah." Claude continued "Every time Caleb and I or any of us," He gestured to everyone accordingly "tried to get you a date, you turned them down." Caleb nodded in agreement, as his mouth was busy taking a giant bite out of his sandwich.

Jack shrugged "Hiccup's different. I don't know." He glanced at all of his friends and started playing with the mystery meat on his plate with a fork.

"What'd Anna and Emma think when you told them?" Pippa asked.

Jack chuckled "Emma was glad she wouldn't be the first one of us to date someone. Ann was happy for me; I mean, she was pretty interested in what Hiccup looked like and everything."

"Okay, but why Hiccup?" Jamie quizzed "That _can't_ be her real name."

"She told me to call her that." Jack clarified.

"Why?" Jamie inquired.

Jack shrugged again "I haven't had a chance to ask why, but that's what she wants me to call her so I will."

"Weird name." Cupcake commented.

"You shouldn't exactly be talking." Claude remarked. Cupcake shot him a glare, to which he put his hands up for mercy.

Monty, who had been in the world of the book in his hands until then, questioned "How long have you been talking to her?"

"A few weeks, give or take." Jack moved his hands as if you say _so-so_ "She called me last week and she comes to the library every day now."

"The one you work at?" The boy with glasses continued.

Jack nodded in response "That's where I met her." Monty took the answer and returned to his book.

"Well, I'm glad for you, Jack." Jamie patted his friend on the back.

"Yeah." Cupcake included "Hope it works out."

"We're not dating yet." Jack stated.

"Cocky, aren't we?" Pippa intrigued.

Jack reclined in his seat "A little." The girls at the table looked at each other and rolled their eyes "What?"

"Nothing." Cupcake chuckled.

Before Jack could question his female friends further, the bell rang to signal the end of the lunch wave and the group had to disperse to their respective classes. Jack tagged along with Monty, as they had the same math class this period, and everyone else soon fell out of sight in the sea of teens bustling through the halls.

Monty dog-eared the page in his book as they walked. "So, you really like her, huh?" he asked, in an effort to regain conversation.

"Yeah." Jack answered "She's really fun to talk to; you'd like her. Another book person."

"I figured you'd get into them once you started shifts at the library." The blond boy commented "Guess I was wrong."

"Eh, I don't hate them." Jack claimed "I just don't have the attention span for it."

Monty laughed "I know that." He gave his friend a mischievous look "So, when can we meet her?"

"Dude, you didn't hear me?" The boy with bleached hair questioned "We're just friends now, nothing serious."

"I still want to see her." Monty stated "I mean, she must be interesting to draw you in."

"If you must." Jack sighed in defeat "Just don't follow me while I'm working; Harry'll flip if he thinks I'm making someone else do my work for me or something."

"Relax," Monty assured "I'll entertain myself until she gets there." The pair entered their classroom "So, see you after school?"

"I can't talk you out of doing this, so why not?" Jack replied.

* * *

><p>It seemed to be another slow day at the library for the bored assistant at the desk. Jack had only been at work for about a half hour and he already wanted his shift to be over. It wasn't uncommon for him to feel like this about his job, but he did grow to like it a bit more when Hiccup came into the picture. After all, he at least made a new friend because of the stupid job. And he got to see her almost every day. It became one of the few perks or being there every week day that Jack had grown very fond of.<p>

But it wasn't until a little later that his usual distraction would come through the door, so Jack decided to get a head start on his homework. Maybe, just maybe, he could get to sleep at a decent hour tonight if he could just get some of his work done while nothing was going on.

This managed to kill a few minutes before someone called his name "Jack." Said boy looked up from his textbook to see a familiar mop of blond hair and set of bright red glasses smiling at him.

"Hey, Monty." Jack smiled.

"I brought some books to return." He gestured to the small stack under his arm.

Jack tapped the top of the desk "Give 'em to me." He ordered. Monty placed the stack on the desk and Jack checked them back into the library one by one. He got to the bottom book and smirked "Isn't this the one you were reading at lunch today?" He asked.

"Yeahâ€¦|" Monty sighed "I had nothing to do in study hall today."

"What about homework?" Jack inquired, putting the last book with the rest of the stack.

"I'll do it later." His friend shrugged it off "There's not that much tonight."

"I'm trying to get a head start." Jack informed "I need to get some sleep after last night."

"What happened, anyway?" Monty leaned on the desk.

Jack scratched the back of his neck "I had to help Anna with something and I don't really want to talk about it."

"Part of dental school?" The blond guessed. Jack only nodded "Sorry, man." His friend shrugged "So, when's this 'Hiccup' getting here?"

"She'll be here soon." Jack peered at the clock "In about fifteen minutes, she'll be here. Go pretend to be busy until then." Monty nodded and wandered over to the shelves of books.

* * *

><p>Like clockwork, Hiccup came through the library doors at 4:25. She walked up to the desk and greeted him as usual. There was only one thing different about her; she had her hair in a ponytail, and a very messy one from the looks of it. It was different seeing her without her auburn hair hiding some of her face, a good different.<p>

Another new thing was that she wasn't alone either; two new faces accompanied her to his desk. Thankfully, they were both female. They both sported the same bright blue eyes and blonde hair and were slightly taller than Hiccup. One had her hair tied in a braid while the other had her messy locks falling freely about her. It looked like she either just got out of an open convertible or she just didn't brush her hair that day.

Hiccup must have noticed that Jack was looking her company over and broke the silence "Jack, these are my friends: Astrid and Cam." She gestured to the one with and without the braid respectfully "Guys, this is Jack." They exchanged waves and smiles.

"So, this is Jack?" Astrid stepped closer "He's taller than I imagined."

Jack turned to Hiccup with a smirk "So, you talk about me, huh?"

Hiccup tugged a stray strand of hair behind her ear "Maybe a littleâ€|"

Cam rolled her eyes behind them and cleared her throat. Hiccup and Astrid turned to her "I thought I was going to get help with history today?"

"Right, rightâ€|" Hiccup stuttered. She turned back to Jack "I'll talk to you later, 'kay?" Jack nodded and the girls made their way to an empty table nearby. They started unpacking their books when Monty walked back to the desk.

"So, which one's her?" He playfully nudged Jack's side.

"What convinced you one of them was her?" Jack inquired.

"I saw your smile while you were talking to them." The blond boy stated "It's the same look you had when you talked about her at school today."

Jack rolled his eyes "The one wearing green, with the brown hair." He gestured to Hiccup, Cam and Astrid's table.

"Hmm." Monty slid his glasses back up the bridge of his nose "She's pretty. Then who's that with her?"

"Her friends." Jack answered "I was beginning to wonder if she had any female friendsâ€|"

"How come?"

"There's this guy that comes in with her every now and thenâ€|" The white-haired youth explained.

"Do you know if they're together?" The other wondered.

"I have no idea." Jack huffed "They just come here sometimes and study until they have to leave."

"You know they could just be friends, right?" Monty asked "Like you are with Pippa and Cupcake."

Jack shrugged "I guessâ€| but it's still bugging me, you knowâ€|" he trailed off as his attention was diverted from the conversation to Hiccup reaching behind her head and pulling out the hair band that was keeping her ponytail in place. She shook her hair out a bit before returning to her studying. Jack would be lying if he said he didn't enjoy the sight at all; he practically watched it in slow motion.

"Overland." Harry's raspy voice slipped into Jack's ears, pulling him out of his little trance. He turned to see the old man a few feet behind them "Stop gawking at girls and get to work."

* * *

><p>Astrid gazed up from her homework to see Hiccup shaking out her messy ponytail. She then slipped the band onto her wrist before starting back on her own work, occasionally peering over at Cam, in case she needed assistance.<p>

"Sorry about your hair, sis." The blonde with the braid broke the silence "I should have had something for you."

Her sister played with her pencil "Eh, it usually looks this way anyway." She shrugged "No big deal."

"I highly doubt your hair always looks like you just rode in Scott's car with all the windows down." Hiccup remarked.

"It's always a mess." Cam answered "But I have better things to do than play with my hair, like perfecting my parry."

"Right, for the tournament coming up." Astrid remembered "Don't worry, Cam, you'll get the team a spot at regionals, no problem."

"Star of the fencing team, after all." Cam bragged, as usual.

"That you are." Hiccup complimented. She gazed at her friend's paper "But you suck at history."

"That's why I'm here." The messy blonde stated "Fix me so I can do well on the next test; I flunked the one last week."

"And mom won't let her play for the team if her grades keep slipping." Astrid pointed out.

"Don't remind me!" Cam rested her head in her hands.

"You know you could have helped her at home, Astrid." Hiccup claimed.

"She's not as good at history as you are." Cam proclaimed.

"Alright, alright," the brunette repeated "maybe we should get some work done? You know, before Scott gets here?"

"Right." Astrid giggled.

Quiet came over the trio of girls, except for Hiccup and Cam's occasional exchanges about the history homework. Astrid scratched down answers to her algebra equations as quickly as usual. Bit as she closed her book to move onto the next assignment, she felt a set of eyes aimed her way. She turned and found Jack quickly looking everywhere but the table.

Astrid smirked at the sight and broke the long silence again. "So, Hiccup," said girl looked up from her notebook "what do you think of Jack?" she whispered.

Cam shrugged "He's okay" for a boy, anyway."

Astrid groaned "Is your name Hiccup?"

"He's a nice guy, why?" Hiccup asked.

"You like him, then?" Astrid insinuated.

The brunette answered "Sure." After it left her lips, she finally understood what she'd just told the braided twin "I-I mean" not like that, uh" w-we're friends. Like" like Felix and I are."

"Uh-huh" Astrid pondered. She glanced at her sister.

Cam sensed the look and finally joined the conversation "I'm staying out of this, if I can."

Astrid rolled her eyes "Whatever, Cam." She switched her attention back to Hiccup "So, that's it? Friends?"

"Yeah." She answered a little too quickly for Astrid's liking "Can we get back to our work now?"

Astrid took the hint and nodded, each girl turning back to their assignments. But, every so often, she'd feel the stare of bright blue eyes aimed at their table. And every time she looked back, he would be frantically looking for something else to admire. Hiccup may have been oblivious to it, as she usually was with these situations, Astrid saw something hidden below the surface that just might have to come out.

* * *

><p>So, if anyone needs clarification on this, Cam is Camicazi from the HTTYD books. I decided to make her and Astrid twin sisters because Camicazi was used as Astrid's base during character design for the movie. So, they have the same genetic features (blonde hair, blue eyes) and some of the same personality traits. I never saw anyone do that with them before, so I wanted to give it a shot

... Sorry that this fic has become the place where I put all of the relationships I haven't seen too much of in this fandom... they all seem to fit together well though, so I'm cool with it. What about you guys?

5. Bonding by Bowling

**Hi, all! Sorry about this update being kinda later than usual... school's starting up again on Tuesday and I had to go to orientation this week and I only have two words: senior year. That is all I will use to describe the stress of that situation and beyond this year. So, sorry if updates are like this for awhile; I have to settle into my new schedule and everything before I get back to my usual schedule of updating once every 7-10 days. **

**This chapter's longer than normal; hopefully this compensates for the longer wait. **

* * *

><p>The next day, Hiccup skipped going to the library in favor of watching Astrid and Scott at lacrosse practice. She hadn't seen a practice in a few weeks now and she kind of owed Scott an easier way home after driving her from her new hangout every day of the week. The auburn-haired girl didn't mind in the slightest; she may not have played a sport herself, but she didn't mind having something to entertain other than her homework or the latest book from the How to Train Your Dragon series she'd been checking out one by one lately.

The only problem came from watching different sides of the field that the school used for practice. The boys' team played on one side and the girls' team on the other. Her basic system would be to watch her brother until he started being too much of a braggart for his own good. Then, she'd switch her gaze to Astrid practicing with the other girls on the team. Let's just say Astrid handled scoring better than Scott didâ€| his head was a little too big for him, if you asked Hiccup.

She sat alone on the bleachers until the girls' coach called for a break and Astrid jogged over to her. Hiccup had become her personal refreshment stand whenever she happened to be at the practices.

"Water, Astrid?" Hiccup called.

"Sure." The blonde replied. She stopped at the base of the bleachers, panting and resting her hands on her knees.

Hiccup complied by taking a water bottle from her backpack and tossing it to her friend, who caught it practically without looking. "So, are we still going bowling this weekend?"

Her friend chuckled "Don't we go every weekend?"

Hiccup shrugged "Just making sure you can Cam aren't busy or anything."

"We're free. Tell Felix if he needs to know too." Hiccup nodded again. Astrid stayed silent for a minute, catching her breath "You know, I was thinkingâ€¦ You should invite Jack." She suggested before taking a sip out of her water bottle.

"Why?"

Astrid ceased drinking and sighed with relief "You said you wanted to get better acquainted with him, didn't you?" Hiccup shrugged and nodded at the question "What better way to do that than have him come and hang out with us?"

"I guessâ€¦" The brunette girl sighed "I'll invite him when I go to the library tomorrow." She paused "Do you think he'll even want to come?"

"Of course. Why, you don't think so?" The blonde crossed her arms.

"Not really."

* * *

><p>"Sure, why not?" Jack replied without a second thought, trying his best to sound like he didn't care either way.<p>

Hiccup blinked "Reallyâ€¦?"

"Yeah." The boy with white hair smiled "I'd love to hang out with you guysâ€¦ in a place where we can talk without getting in trouble." He muttered as he saw a few other people in the library shooting a look that was begging them to shut up.

Hiccup giggled and lowered her voice "That would be nice. We all meet up at the bowling alley down the road, The Bog Bowler." Jack nodded, recalling where the place was "Tomorrow night at seven, okay?" He nodded again "Great." The corners of her mouth created a smile before she shifted the weight in her backpack and walked over to her usual table, the center table in the row closest to the bookshelves.

Jack felt a smile creep its way onto his features too as she went about her own business. It probably felt greater than it should that she actually wanted to hang out with him outside of the dungeon he called a workplace and she began to make part of her schedule.

Hanging out with her could sound great in Jack's head. But the only question that stuck out to him. What did this even mean? Did inviting him mean that she just wanted to get to know him orâ€¦ something else?

* * *

><p>After getting home from work (on time, for once), Jack snagged some leftovers from the fridge to eat before climbing the stairs and making his way into Anna's room. When he walked in, she had her nose buried in one of her tooth books, tacky-looking purple glasses hanging low on her nose and standing out against her dark complexion. Emma was sitting at the foot of the bed, reading her own book quite intently. It seemed some of the elder's nerdiness started to rub off on the younger. Only when their brother cleared his throat did either notice him.<p>

"Jack," Anna merely glanced up from her page "what's going on?"

"I thought I should tell you that I may have made some progress with Henrika." He claimed.

Simultaneously, both girls saved their place in their books and closed them, Jack gaining their full attention instantaneously.

"What happened?" Emma enthusiastically asked, resting her chin in her propped up hands.

"Tell us!" Anna demanded.

"Okay, okay, calm down." Jack sat on the small empty space on Anna's bed "Looks like I'm spending time with her tomorrow night."

"So, you're taking her on a date?" Anna asked excitedly.

"No, I'm not." Jack rubbed the back of his neck "It's too soon for that, anyway. She goes bowling with her friends a lot, I guess, and she asked me if I wanted to tag along with them."

"At least it's a good sign." His older sister pointed out.

"How is this a good thing?"

"It means she doesn't totally hate you." Emma giggled.

Jack deadpanned "I could have figured that out on my own."

"Have you told your friends yet?" Anna questioned.

Her brother turned back to her "No, why do you-?"

"Tell them what?" Jack was interrupted by their mother, Mary, who was now standing in the doorway pairing her work clothes with a confused

expression.

"Oh, mom, uhâ€¦" He stammered.

"What's going on?" She entered the room "You three don't just get excited for no reason."

The siblings glanced from one to another with uncertainty until Emma shouted out "Jack's going on a date tomorrow!" Said boy tossed the girl a death glare.

"What? You are?" Mary sounded almost too excitedâ€¦ greatâ€¦ "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because it's not really a date." Jack calmly clarified "This girl I met at work and have been talking to for a few weeks now invited me to hang out with her and her friends tomorrow night. They're going to that bowling alley near the library."

"Sounds like fun." His mother tucked a loose strand of brown hair behind her ear.

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to it." The white-haired boy commented.

Mary stood silent for a moment, glancing between her children "Well, do you like her?" She suddenly asked.

Jack shrugged, a little bit of heat forming under the hoodie he'd yet to throw off "A littleâ€¦ maybeâ€¦"

"He's been coming to us for advice." Anna explained "And I told him to keep me updated on it because the last thing he needs is to screw it up."

Mary chuckled "At least you're helping him." She returned her gaze to her son "So, tell me about her."

Jack groaned at the command. He'd just gone through this awhile ago, didn't he? But it was pointless to wiggle out of this. So he started to, yet again, describe Hiccup to her and get her up to date on what's happening between themâ€¦ which wasn't much, but still.

All Jack knew was that every single female in the whole house was now more excited about this development than he was. Sure, he was happy he was interested in her. Hiccup's a really cool person, from what he's seen of her. But he was more confused than anything. He'd never had a crush, if you could even call this one, before. He'd never dated because he never saw a point until now.

All of a sudden he wanted things that he had no idea how to handle properly and keep it from blowing up in his face. And, in a way, that scared him. He really liked Hiccup. He didn't want to make her hate him because he made a mistake or anything. Because Anna was right. He would probably screw it up without even realizing it, being soâ€¦ Jack. He needed all the help he could get with this.

* * *

><p>The next day, Jack arrived at The Bog Bowler a little later than

he'd originally hoped. Turns out he didn't exactly remember where this place was after allâ€¦ oops. He'd driven past it before but never stopped to see the inside. The bowling alley was a quaint place, to sum it up basically. It was a large brick building with a row of windows on both sides of a duo of wooden doors. The place was attached to a small bar called "Bertha's." Apparently, the two places had the same owners.<p>

He stepped inside and found the place pretty standard for a bowling alley. Hardwood floors, lanes taking half of the building's space and the whole back wall. Part of the floor was elevated, separating an eating area from the bowling lanes. It was pretty well occupied, with people playing at quite a few lanes or eating the food that the place served.

Jack strode up to the counter to get some bowling shoes and stopped in front of the employee manning it, a stout man with a chestnut brown beard. He gave Jack a sweet smile and welcomed him."

"I've never seen you here before." The man noticed "First time bowling?"

"Nah." Jack answered "Just first time bowling here."

Jack told the man his shoe size and he scurried over to the shelves to find him the right fit. He brought a pair that had definitely seen better days to the counter.

"So, uh, how much?" Jack pulled out his wallet.

"Six fifty." The employee replied.

"He's with us, Mulch!" Jack turned to see Astrid standing at a table with Cam, Felix and Hiccup. He turned back to the employee, who was now smiling a little wider at him.

"Then they're on the house." Mulch stated to Jack, who looked from the table to the clerk in confusion. "Go on, go be with your friends."

"Uhâ€¦ alrightâ€¦" Jack took his shoes and met the others at one of the tables on the elevated platform, taking an empty seat next to Hiccup. "Hey." The rest of the group greeted him "So, uhâ€¦ how come I don't have to pay for these?" He gestured to the shoes.

"Our parents own the place." Cam nonchalantly answered, kicking her feet up on the last empty seat "So, once a week, we can bring a few friends in for free sets and food. Shoes too."

"Yeah." Felix added "It's become our weekly tradition."

Jack started to switch out his shoes "Alright, just making sure I won't get arrested for not paying for bowling shoes." He chuckled.

"You sure that's all you'd be arrested for there?" Cam remarked.

Jack's chuckle grew to a laugh "I'm sure." He tied the laces of his shoes and sat back up to meet everyone else's gaze "So, what are we

doing up here instead of down there?" He tilted his head to the lanes.

"Mom's making our dinner." Astrid replied "Whenever we show up, she likes to get us our order herself."

"Sometimes she gives us something she's trying out too. Nothing gets on the menu without our approval." Hiccup brought up "We're kind of her taste test guinea pigs."

"So I might get a free sample tonight?" Jack leaned against the table top on his elbows.

"You get free food, anyway." Cam proclaimed "Just some of it might be something we've never seen before and could either be really disgusting or a gift from the cooking gods."

Jack started sniggering again "I like you, uhâ€¦" Suddenly, he forgot which twin was which.

"Cam." The messier blonde reminded "Astrid always has her hair braided or something."

"At least I take care of my hairâ€¦" Astrid muttered.

"I do too!" Cam declared.

Astrid scanned her figure "Did you brush it this morning?"

Her twin turned away from her "Noâ€¦"

"My point exactly." Astrid remarked.

At pretty much the perfect time, a large tray of pizza, a stack of paper plates and a huge basket of fries were placed in the center of the table.

A woman that definitely had some meat on her bones was the server. Jack also noted that her light brown hair was pulled back in a bun, that her clothes were covered by a grease-stained apron and that she had uhâ€¦ a quite large breast to her. "There you go, kids." She made her way to Hiccup and set down a small basket of fried chicken strips in front of her "I'm trying a new batter, Henrika. Try it out."

To this, Hiccup nodded "Thank you."

"No problem, anything for you, dear." Bertha finally noticed Jack beside Hiccup "Who's this? A new friend?"

"Uh, yeah." Hiccup started "This is Jack." He gave the woman a wave and a smile.

"Nice to meet you, Jack." She greeted "I'm Bertha; I own the place. I'm sure the girls and Felix filled you in on what you need to know." Jack nodded "Good." She started to walk away from the table, untying her apron as she went "Just holler if you need anything else, kids!"

"We will!" Astrid called back.

The braided twin turned back to see everyone else taking slices of the pizza and putting them on the paper plates they were supplied with. Well, everyone but Hiccup, who snagged some of the fries and started to nibble on the chicken strips.

"Don't like pizza?" Jack asked.

"I do." Hiccup admitted "But I can't eat it with my bracesâ€|"

"You could always scrape the cheese off, Hiccup." Felix pointed out "Then it won't be a problem, right?"

Hiccup shook her head "It's not the same that way."

"Fair enough." Cam added.

* * *

><p>Hiccup watched four sets of hands sweep up over half of the pizza like it was their last meal. Jack and Astrid each took three slices, Cam claimed two and Felix settled for one and a big helping of the fries.<p>

They began eating in silence until Cam brought up "So, I think I owe you Hiccup. I passed the quiz in history today."

Hiccup smiled "You don't owe me anything, really."

"I just want to thank you for pulling me out of the gutter with my mom. I'm in the tournament now, set in stone."

"That's great!" Felix congratulated "I'll definitely come see you."

"I kind of have to be there, so count me in." Astrid commented "Hiccup?"

"If I can get a ride." She shrugged "But it's still a few months away; I don't know what everyone else is doing then."

"One of us can take you." Felix offered.

"You sure?" The only brunette at the table asked.

"Yeah. How many times have you gotten rides from any of us before?" The blond boy continued "It's no problem." He smiled.

After a little more conversation, Hiccup noticed that Jack had remained quiet since they got their food. He was eating his third slice of pizza crust first when she looked over at him.

She opened her mouth to speak before Cam blurted out "You eat pizza that way too?"

Jack's eyes widened at the remark "Yeahâ€| you don't think it's weird, do you?"

"Dude, I do it too!" She exclaimed. Jack cracked a smile at that.

After that little ice-breaker, Jack seemed to come around more and more to the group. They all shared stories and laughed at jokes that someone made as the conversation went on. Over that talk, Hiccup learned that Jack was a junior at his school and that he had at least one sisterâ€¦ sometimes when he brought her up, she seemed older than him and other times younger. He must have had more than one for that to happenâ€¦

Overall, Hiccup thought that dinner was pretty tameâ€¦ until Jack and Cam got into a contest to see who could stuff more French fries in their mouth. Cam wound up winning by one fry, much to Jack's disappointment, and Hiccup and the others laughed at how stupid they looked with the shreds of fried potato sticking out of their mouths.

When practically every morsel of food had been consumed, all the teens were contently chatting when Bertha came back to check on them and bring the tray back into the kitchen. She handed Astrid three scorecards and told them to take any lane they wanted. That was when they decided to start their first set on an open bowling lane and set up their scorecard, Felix dubbing himself the score-keeper as usual because the Hofferson twins (one more so than the other) had a bad habit of cheating when they kept score.

Being the always-important score-keeper, Felix went up first and snagged a spare with no problem. Then, Astrid wound up with a seven-ten split and found herself one pin short of a spare. With a slip of her foot, Hiccup managed to earn eight points and Cam quickly followed up with a strike, which she proceeded to cheer about and dared Jack to "beat that." Needless to say that their little rivalry carried on for quite a bit of the game, the two of them constantly out-scoring the other with their best throws.

Everyone else stayed out of the little competition until Hiccup finally got her footing on the lane and scored all spares and strikes from then until the mid-way point of the game. Finally, she had her usual game back. Cam started instigating that she could beat both Jack and her without thinking about it and Hiccup accepted the challenge. The game ended with Cam's score being the highest, closely followed by Hiccup and Jack earning a very close third place.

Something about this development surprised Hiccup because, while Cam did her overly common victory dance with the scorecard, Jack just smiled and congratulated her on winning. It might have been strange to think, but Hiccup pegged Jack as a bit of a sore loser for some reason. It was refreshing to see that her assumption was wrong entirely.

It only told her that Jack might be a lot of fun to have around every weekend. He was easy to talk to, an open book and she had to admit that he had a pretty good form while bowlingâ€¦ and he did look good from certain angles. And he seemed to get along with everyone else pretty well and she would be lying if she said that she didn't enjoy his company. She did catch him giving Felix a few weird looks, thoughâ€¦ why she didn't know. Maybe he was confused by the fact that the blond hung out with a trio of girls every weekend. She just shrugged it off, though. It wasn't that important, right?

The second set ended with Cam and Felix tying for first place, Astrid

in second and Hiccup in third. Jack having lost the competitive stress that came from the battle with Cam must have pattered out or something. After all, she won their round and that was that for now. Their final set finished with Jack getting his game back and scoring first place. Cam, having come in second this time, accused him of cheating and he waved it off with a smile made up of teeth as white as the snow that would be falling again within the next few months.

All in all, the evening went by as naturally as any other one the group has had since they struck this deal with Bertha about a year ago. It was just that, this time, Jack added to the fun. But every now and then she caught the boy's bright blue eyes on her. She didn't know why, maybe just coincidence. But his chilly blue irises felt warm, if that made any sense. She couldn't find a way to describe it.

Felix was the first one to go home, when they group heard the familiar sound of his mother's car making it's iconic honk that sounded kind of like a default ringtone on a cell phone. Jack left soon after that and thanked them for inviting him out before heading out the door.

Once she was sure he was gone, Hiccup turned to the twins and asked "So was there any other reason you wanted me to invite Jack?"

"I had no part in that scheme." Cam clarified, putting up her hands defensively.

Astrid shrugged "Just a theory I have."

Not a moment sooner, the girls heard the faint sound of rock music blasting outside, followed by a honk.

"That's my ride." Hiccup sighed as she stood "So, would you guys mind if he becomes a regular with us?"

Astrid shrugged. "I don't see why not; I liked him."

"I want him back next week." Cam ordered "I demand a re-match, he so cheated that last set."

Hiccup giggled "I'll ask him if he can come next week." She walked up to the counter and returned the shows to Mulch before waving back at the girls and heading out the door.

6. Monotone Morning

Hello, readers~! So, uh... updates slowed down because school and blah, blah, I'm sure you've heard that from some of your other fic authors too (especially if you read any more of my fics...) so i won't bore you all with that mess.

Not much happens in this chapter, until you get the end but I wanted to play with Hiccup and Scott's relationship again and introduce another new face. This one's one of Scott's friends and... yeah... I'll leave an explanation at the bottom for those who haven't read the HTTYD books because he comes from there.

**I honestly didn't think people would like this fic at all, so I'm glad that it's not a total failure or anything... thanks for reading and whatever else you guys like to do with this fic. :) **

* * *

><p>Sunday was starting to prove itself as a very tiring day for Hiccup. Maybe it was because she stayed up late last night reading How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse, the fourth _How to Train your Dragon_ it was the fact that Toothless woke her up at seven in the morning to bark at the neighbor's cat. Maybe it was because her parents had used their one mutual day off to do something together for once, so she had more chores to do.

â€| Or maybe it was the sound of Scott whining at her to make another helping of eggs for him when he walked into the kitchen and saw her silencing her own hunger. Seriously, the boy couldn't feed himself? She gave in to his demand in hopes that he would quiet down afterwardsâ€| but Hiccup was stupid to think that would ever be the truth. It was ten AM when he decided to go into the garage to play with his rust bucket of a car and blast the stereo. Sometimes she wondered why the thing hadn't broken yet; it had to be maxed out on sound capacity.

But that was normal for the sounds of the Haddock house, especially when Val wasn't around to mediate the volume. Hiccup managed to drown it out with her headphones while she turned on the Wii and played a few rounds of Mario Kart. It was her and Scott's silly tradition to compete with each other on the game frequently and lately he'd been kicking her butt at it. He had to either be cheating or practicing, so Hiccup set her virtual wheels to the race track and started to train against the game, easily snagging the star cup for the fifth time.

Then, after two hours unknowingly ticked by, Hiccup heard the music turn down (thank the gods for that) and the door to the garage open and shut. That was all normal. But what wasn't expected was two sets of footsteps coming inside.

"Henrika!" Scott called "What's for lunch?"

"Can't you make it yourself?" She called back.

"Come on," A voice that she immediately recognized chimed "not even for me?"

Hiccup rolled her eyes with a knowing smile as she stood and found her brother and another all-too familiar face beside him. She would recognize the guy anywhere, being bigger than Scott and his unmistakable curly black hair and nose ring adorning his right nostril. It was Scott's best friend, Derek.

Now Hiccup was amazed that she was surprised that he was here to begin with. The guy lived only a few houses down and the two have been friends for as long as she could remember; Val claims that it was pretty much since they could walk. It wasn't a daily occurrence to see him, but Hiccup couldn't say it was a rare event either.

"Oh, great," She sarcastically complained "Dog's Breath is here."

He chuckled "Nice to see you too, Hiccup."

"Seriously, we should stop that." Scott commented.

"I told you; it's gonna stick, Snot Face~." Hiccup giggled.

Scott moaned under his breath "Whatever." He shifted on his feet "So what about lunch?"

"What _about _lunch?" Hiccup restated.

"What's on the menu, sis?" Her brother clapped his hands together.

"Oh, no." She retorted "No, I already made you breakfast this morning; I'm not feeding you and Derek lunch. If anything, you owe _me_ a meal."

Scott just gaped at her for a moment before he cleared his throat "Alright." He affirmed "How about we go for a burger or something? My treat." He looked away at the last part with a look that just screamed 'I can't believe I'm doing this.'

Hiccup gave a smile that she tried not to make appear evil in any way. Scott was kind of at her mercy because he has this outright refusal to learn how to cook anything that can't be prepared by putting it in the microwave for under three minutes. And, when Val wasn't around, that meant Hiccup had to feed him and sometimes her father, if he came home from work earlier than usual.

"Alright." She replied.

"Just don't leave me bankrupt this time." Scott warned.

"Yeah, yeah." Hiccup waved him off, passing the boys by to enter the garage and find her brother's truck sitting on a makeshift lift made out of wooden crates and some pieces of his workout equipment without the wheels on it and the hood open. "Scott?"

"Yeah?" He called back.

"Are you going to put the wheels on your truck or are we walking?"

There was a long silence before she heard the vehicle's owner shout "Shit!"

So, she spent the next twenty minutes watching Derek and Scott fumble around the truck and put the wheels back on it and pull out their makeshift lift piece by piece. One final crashing noise and the vehicle was once again on the concrete floor. Derek filed into the passenger seat and Scott assumed his place at the steering wheel.

"Come on!" He complained "I'm starving!"

Hiccup got up from the box she was sitting on and wandered to the passenger side "If you weren't a pair of idiots, you'd be stuffing your face right now." Derek opened his door and Hiccup climbed in.

Now, one would like to think that Hiccup clambered into the backseat of the truck. And one would be rightâ€¦ if Scott's truck had a backseat. But no, it only has two front seats because the idiot took out the backseats so that he could recline the front seats all the way back or something like that. So Hiccup assumed her usual position for rides like this, on Derek's lap. It didn't exactly matter, anyway. Hiccup had been around Derek enough to consider him another older brother.

The two managed to buckle themselves in; after all, they'd become pros at it, and the trio started the ride to the boys' favorite fast food joint. And, after enduring ten minutes of her brother's music blasting as usual and a conversation between the boys about going to spy on the cheerleading tryouts next week, they made it. Hiccup wasted no time climbing out of the car, the boys following at their laid back pace.

"What's the rush, Henrika?" Derek implored.

"I thought you two were hungry." Hiccup recalled, starting for the door inside "That and I don't need to hear about your weird, perverted plans."

"What?" Scott waved an arm nonchalantly "We need to start looking for dates for prom."

Hiccup rolled her eyes "Isn't that still a semester away?"

"Doesn't hurt to browse early." Her brother defended.

"Whatever." Hiccup stopped and looked back at him "Waitâ€¦ does this mean you're over Astrid now?" She smirked "This is great; I'll have to tell her next time I see her."

Scott shook his head "No, this is a backup plan in case she says no. But, hey, who can say no to all of this?" he gestured to himself and gave what he claimed as his "winner smile."

"She already has; what's one more time?" Hiccup remarked, trying to hold back a laugh.

Scott stripped off his smile and rolled his eyes, shoulders slouching "Just tell me what you want and find a table for us."

"Get me my usual." Hiccup answered, turning towards the tables on her right and finding the one she always gravitated towards available. It was in the corner, by the big window in the front of the establishment, and the seat against the wall was part of a bench spread across the wall and to the last table in the row. She seated herself on the bench and tapped her fingers against the checkerboard tile tabletop, taking in the normal scent of fried food and seeing where her brother and his friend were in the line.

Her gaze turned out the window and she watched cars roll through her line of sight until she felt a buzz come from her pocket. She took out her cell phone and unlocked it to read a text message. It was from Jack.

Hey, Hiccup. :P

She smiled at the message and giggled a little at the emoticon. Of course, Jack would be the guy to use themâ€¦

_Hey. _She replied.

What's up?

_Out to lunch with my brother and his friend. _She typed _You?_

_Eh, my sisters are busy and I have nothing to do. :/ So I thought you'd entertain me. _

Hiccup sighed _You have a car, don't you?_

_Yeah, but nowhere to go. _

Hiccup thought for a minute before answering _How about you read a book?_

No way!

Why? You work in a library.

Exactly; I'm around books enough as it is.

Hiccup sniggered at the message and typed back _Then be bored._

You're so mean, Hiccup.

_I know. _Her smile grew.

"Who're you texting?" Hiccup glanced up to see Scott and Derek setting their tray of food down on the table and sitting down, Scott bring the one to ask her the question.

"My friend, Jack." She innocently answered. She texted again _Brother's here with the food; hold on._ And put her phone back in her pocket.

"Jack?" Derek blinked "Never heard that name from you before."

"Neither have I." Scott confirmed "Who's Jack?"

Hiccup took her burger, fries and drink from the tray, trying quite hard to ignore the four burgers, two large fries and giant soda that were in front of her brother. Guess he wasn't kidding about being starving; it was a burger and fry more than his usual spread. "I met him about a month ago. He works at the library."

"The one I've been picking you up from after lacrosse every day?" The dark brunet pried further.

"Yeah, why?" His sister unwrapped her burger and took a bite "I thought you, mom and dad wanted me to make more friends." She felt a buzz in her pocket again and deemed it Jack responding that he'd wait, so she didn't answer.

"Yeah, but you hang around guys all the time." Derek shrugged, still chewing "Don't you want to spend time with other girls?"

"I have Astrid and Cam; that's good enough." Hiccup replied.

"Whatever, Henrika." Scott tossed up an arm in defeat, now making his way through his second burger and finishing up his first box of fries. Did he have to talk with his mouth full? He then reached into his pocket and took out his cell phone to read a message. His eyes widened as his eyes scanned the screen and he turned to Derek "Dude, we gotta go."

Derek slouched in his seat "Go where? We just got here."

"I have a meeting with my coach; I completely forgot." Scott hastily replied "I gotta go and you said you'd come with me."

"What are you talking about?" Hiccup interjected.

"Nothing." Scott seemed like he couldn't get that out fast enough "I need to take you home; grab your food and let's go." He followed his own order, snagging his remaining food and running out to the truck.

Hiccup and Derek were left to clean up the table and collect the rest of their meals. "What was that about?" She questioned "Where's the fire?"

"He's just doing some extra training so he can make football tryouts in the spring." Derek explained.

"Again? He didn't make it that past three years." Hiccup recalled as the two discarded the trash and made their way to the truck.

"I know." Derek leaned closer to her "Just don't remind him of thatâ€¦"

The pair slid into the passenger seat and Scott broke more traffic rules in order to get home within five minutes, kick Hiccup out of the car and speed back away, almost taking out the mailbox as he got out of the driveway.

Well, so much for a decent outingâ€¦ again. She took her key out of her pocket and let herself inside with a heavy sigh. Now what?

Then, she remembered she was texting Jack before that fiasco happened and slipped her phone back into her hand. She was right, that last text was just Jack saying Okay. :) _

Hiccup wandered from the landing into the living room and plopped down on the couch before starting up the conversation again. Okay, I can talk now. Sorry about that._

It's cool. So what's going on?_

My brother just dumped me at the house because he was late for something orâ€¦ something? _Hiccup shrugged as she sent it, as if Jack would even see thatâ€¦

_Really? _Jack typed back.

Yeah. That's kinda normal around here.

A few minutes ticked by before Jack sent another message _Hey, you're as bored as I am, right?_

Hiccup raised an eyebrow _Yeahâ€¦ whyâ€¦?_

If you text me your address, I can come pick you up and we can do something?

Hiccup stared at the message, unsure of how to respond.

* * *

><p>... I have no words for that ending; I just like to leave you guys hanging sometimes. Sorry!

Anyway, my explanation... Derek is Dogsbreath from the HTTYD book series; he's basically Snotlout's best friend/side kick in the books and he takes part in picking on Hiccup and stuff like that. I altered their relationship quite a bit so that they're more than bullies but they'll still pick on Hiccup from time to time. They're all pretty much family comfortable with each other so... I figured Derek would be nice to her but also love to mess with her when he and Scott are bored.

7. Competition and Cones

**Hello, readers! Sorry for the delay in my updates; school has been running my whole life lately, outside of study halls, so... yeah... they'll probably be this way unless I have breaks and/or minimal homework. I'm sorry! I really am! **

**But I'm trying to compensate for these later updates with longer chapters now, though, so yay~! I hope this chapter's satisfactory to everyone; I worked all week on it. **

* * *

><p>If you text me your address, I can come pick you up and we can do something?

Hiccup stared at the message, unsure of how to respond. Her fingers hovered over the small keypad with uncertainty. She was nervous about responding but she had no idea why. Jack was her friend, why should it be a problem if they hung out? They were bored and wanted to do something, that's all.

If this was Astrid, Cam or Felix, she'd have immediately accepted the offer. But, for Jackâ€¦ she hesitated. Was it because she still barely knew him? That couldn't be it, or she wouldn't have invited him out with her and her friends last night. Why was this even debatable?

She calmed her thoughts before responding_ Alright._ With her address attached to the message.

There, it was done. But her nerves still stayed a little longer. It was strange, reallyâ€¦ she'd never been that indecisive about spending time with a friend before.

* * *

><p>A smile couldn't help but creep onto Jack's face when he read Hiccup's answer. They'd be hanging out together, and outside the library for once! And for more than ten minutes! He finally had something to do today. You knowâ€¦ besides his homeworkâ€¦ he'd do that laterâ€¦<p>

Jack rolled off the couch and grabbed his hoodie, throwing it over his plain blue t-shirt and taking his car keys out of his pocket. He tossed the keys and his snowflake keychain in his palm as he sauntered to the front door.

He put his hand on the doorknob and he heard Anna call out "Where are you going?"

He turned to see his older sister coming down the stairs, her colorfully dyed hair pulled back in a ponytail and her violet glasses on. "I'm uhâ€¦ I'm going out."

"Yeah, I know that." Anna slumped her shoulders "But where?"

"Wellâ€¦" Jack slid a foot against the hardwood floor "I was texting Henrika andâ€¦ I'm going to pick her up and we're going somewhereâ€¦"

His sister climbed the rest of the way down the stairs and stood in front of him in silence, processing what he'd just said. Then a pure white smile flashed from her with a loud coo "Awwww."

Jack blinked "What?"

"You already asked her out?" Anna excitedly hopped in front of her brother "That's great!"

"Uhâ€¦" Jack stammered "Noâ€¦ no, I didn't. I'm just, umâ€¦ she was bored and I was bored, so umâ€¦ we're hanging out."

"Just hanging out?" She stared up at him in bewilderment.

"Yeah." Jack clarified "It's just we'll be by ourselves this timeâ€¦" He looked away from her.

"Any idea where you're taking her yet?" She asked. Her brother shrugged in response "Okay, thenâ€¦ how about some advice?" His blue eyes met her deep brown color. It was a bit strange to gaze upon her natural eye color, as her contacts turned her irises a vibrant purple "Think of this as a way to get closer to her, then. Take her someplace where you can have fun together. Just like going out with her and her friends last night." He nodded "And be yourself, okay?" She added "Girls don't like it when you try to force things."

"Okay." He proceeded out the door as she rounded the corner, assumingly to grab a snack or something. Once the door was shut

behind him, Jack strode to his car, climbed inside and started the engine "Okay," he sighed. He slipped his phone back out of his pocket and scanned her address again, putting it in the GPS program on his phone and pulling out of the driveway, following the directions carefully.

* * *

><p>Hiccup locked up the house and waited on the front steps for Jack to pull up. She took her cell phone out of her pocket to check the time and patted her other pocket, to ensure that her keys and wallet were safely inside.<p>

She watched as cars rolled past her, half expecting all of them to be Jack because she had no clue what kind of car he drove. She sighed and leaned back on the stoop after about ten cars passed her by.

Her mind wandered back to Scott ditching her about a half an hour ago. It wasn't that it was strange behavior, really. Scott had this habit of not picking her up from places or leaving because he got bored. And he always hopped in his truck and went to who-knows-where when he didn't want to stay at home with his little sister. But this time was a bit different. He usually blew off his business to her like it was no big deal, like he does with just about everything else. But when he tried to explain it to her this timeâ€| he was very quick, almost like he was more embarrassed than in a rush.

She let her mind wander on it for a bit before deciding that she would figure out whatever it was in good time. After all, she was the one that did the laundry, most of the time. He's bound to leave some kind of clue in his pockets at some point. That was actually a way that she kept money in her wallet. Her rule was whoever does the laundry keeps what they find in the pockets, excluding cell phones and the like. She thought it would be incentive for her brother to actually do a chore or two, but she was clearly wrong about that ideaâ€|

Her train of thought was interrupted by the sound of a horn. Hiccup jumped at the noise and saw Jack had pulled up into the driveway. She should have figured his car would be blue; it was the boy's favorite color, after all. She stood and walked to the passenger side, sliding in.

"Hey." She greeted, buckling herself in.

"Hey." Jack smiled "Did I really take that long?"

She giggled "No, I was just thinking and I zoned out."

"Ah." The white-haired boy affirmed.

"Soâ€|" She trailed off "Where do you wanna go?"

Jack leaned back in his seat "How do you feel about the arcade?"

She raised an eyebrow "Really?"

"Yeah, why not?" He shrugged.

Hiccup shrugged back "Just didn't expect that suggestion."

"So you're cool with it, then?" Jack confirmed.

"Yeah." She beamed "Sounds like fun."

"Okay, then." He put the car in gear "The arcade it is."

* * *

><p>About a twenty minute drive and the two were pulled up in front of the arcade in a plaza in the center of town. It was a small place, but it would surely do the trick. Jack had thought about this all the way to Hiccup's house. She had a brother, so she had to have played video games at some point, right? He could have fun with her and maybe, just maybe, he could find a game she wasn't good at and help her out. Was it wrong that he thought about how nice it would be to help her aim the gun in an FPS game? Because that was one of his first thoughts, once he thought of taking her here.<p>

"I haven't been here in years." The brunette claimed "Scott and I stopped going when he hit high school. He got into lacrosse and stuff and he didn't have time for it anymore."

"You didn't want to come by yourself?" Jack questioned.

"Not really." Hiccup shrugged "Sometimes we play our Wii together, when he has time. And, since we have that, what's the point of me coming here alone?"

Alright, point for Jack. She was a bit of a gamer. This should be fun, alright.

The two stepped inside the arcade and promptly made their way to the change machine to exchange some of their smaller bills for quarters. Jack traded in five ones for quarters and Hiccup settled for doing the same with the three singles she had on her, claiming that, between the two of them, they definitely had enough to occupy themselves for a little while.

Hiccup wandered through the aisles of game consoles, occasionally peering over the shoulder of people playing one of the machines. Jack did the same but found his gaze catching on Hiccup exploring more than the games. There was something about the curiosity on her face that drew him to follow her as she glided from system to system and the way the screens light up the grassy plains in her eyes.

Then, the meadows flared when she focused on an unoccupied console. Jack stepped next to her and registered it as a fighting game that could be played alone or with another person. She looked up at him and smiled "Wanna play me?"

Jack smirked "I don't know, Hiccupâ€|" He leaned back on his heels "I'm pretty good at this game."

"You scared I'm gonna beat you?" Hiccup crossed her arms and smirked back.

"Oh, that's it." Jack playfully countered "You're on."

Jack inserted the amount of quarters they needed and selected their

characters. And Jack learned pretty quickly that either Hiccup was better at this game than he was or she picked the one character that was more over-powered than he thought. Within thirty seconds of the first round, Hiccup's gigantic mountain of a man, who kinda resembled a Viking, had slaughtered Jack's favorite avatar of the game, an ice wizard who was, uhâ€¦ slightly underdressed, concerning her powers.

"Ha!" Hiccup gloated "I thought you said you were good at this game?"

"That was just the warm up round, Hiccup." Jack excused "Round two, you'll be thrown for a loop."

"Sure you don't wanna back out while you can?" The brunette jeered.

"No way." Jack retorted "You won't get rid of me that easy."

Hiccup smirked and they both turned back to the screen as the second round started. This time, Jack put up much more of a fight but Hiccup still came out on top with one minute left on the timer.

"Wow, didn't think you'd be much harder to beat there." She complimented.

"What can I say?" Jack waved a hand nonchalantly "It's a gift."

"Oh, really?" Hiccup retorted with venom in her tone "Does this 'gift' only apply to this game or are there others you want me to kick your butt at?"

"Well," The white-haired boy mused, glancing around the arcade.

From there, the two spent most of their quarters trying out different machines as they opened up. Hiccup proved to be quite the gamer, beating Jack at quite a few games and coming in a very close second in others. It seemed that no matter what game it was, she was good at it. But that was kind of expected, after she told him about how she and her brother used to come here all the time.

"Okay," the older playfully called, after yet another beat down by the younger "you've forced my hand, Hiccup. I'm bringing out the big guns." He grabbed Hiccup's wrist and led her to the back of the arcade, where there was a machine for a dancing game set up. It was playing an annoying pop tune when the two walked up to it, but Jack would fix that momentarilyâ€¦ if he could convince Hiccup to play him.

"Really?" She tried not to laugh "DDR?"

"What?" Jack deflected "This game's great."

"You couldn't be good at another game, could you?" Hiccup complained.

Now it was Jack's turn to taunt "You're not scared I'm gonna beat youâ€¦ are you?"

"Fine." Hiccup threw her hands up in defense "But don't say I didn't

warn you."

Jack watched with a bit of caution as she stepped onto one of the platforms and inserted their quarters. What did she mean by that, exactly? That couldn't possibly mean she was good at this one too, right? She seemed like she really didn't like the game all that muchâ€¦ maybe she sucked and didn't want to embarrass herself in front of him? But one thing that Jack was learning pretty quickly was that Hiccup was really competitive. He'd have to play his best if he wanted to get an upper hand on her.

"So, are you gonna pick the song or do you want me to?" Hiccup asked, tapping her foot on the platform to scroll through the options.

Jack hopped onto the other platform and chuckled "Surprise me."

"Okay." She let out a bit of an evil laugh as she picked the song.

Jack groaned when he heard the sample tune play before Hiccup confirmed it "Butterfly, really?"

"Problem?" Hiccup drawled.

"Only if my problem is kicking your butt." Jack retorted.

A few seconds later and the arrows started to cross the screen, the two teens' feet both matching up with their times, each of them only slipping up once in a great while. Jack's eyes were locked on the glow of the screen and the colors flashing with each arrow that was matched perfectly. It was funny how this was the only form of dancing that he was any good at whatsoever. Off of the DDR machine, Jack had two left feet.

His focus was honed down on the task at hand but, even so, it seemed his two left feet caught up with him. One little slip up and he missed more than three arrows within the few seconds it took him to recover from nearly tripping over his own shoes. Now do you see why Jack hated shoes so much? If he was barefoot, he wouldn't have had that problem.

Apparently, he was so in the zone that he hadn't noticed until a minute after he tripped that a crowd had started to form around their competition. He only realized when one of them apparently did something that the group liked. Jack was thinking that it was him until he heard one of the people in the masses behind them shout "You go, girl!"

Well, uhâ€¦ maybe they were putting up a good fight against each other and Jack just didn't have time to notice? He hoped he regained whatever ground he lost when he nearly fell flat on his face. But he didn't have any time to glance at his opponent's score. He wanted to at least _try_ to make some kind of impression on her while they were out together.

The song ended with applause from the crowd behind them, which Jack noticed was about ten people when he turned around and wiped his brow.

There were comments of "Wow, that was so close!" and "Close match!" along with the cheers from the onlookers.

Then something else sounded "Whoa, Hiccup," One of the guys in the crowd called "I think you beat your old record!"

"Old record?" Jack repeated "What old record?"

His question was answered when the high scores for the game came up and he saw the initials "HHH" at the top of the list. A few seconds later, it was moved down one space on the chart and Hiccup's score for their game appeared. She put in the same three letters as the one below her. Now in third place was Jack's own high score, with the initials "JOF," from another time he'd played. After she did so, her apparent fans all dissolved from the group they became and scattered back to other machines in the arcade.

"Wait, that's you?" He questioned "Yours is the one that kept me from having the high score?"

"Yep." She confirmed "Henrika Hannah Haddock. This was one of the games that I always beat Scott at when we used to come here, so he always played me at it when I couldn't win at anything else."

"He did that for you?"

"Yeah." Hiccup recalled "Sometimes his friend Derek would tag along too. They'd play each other and then I got whoever won their round."

"Do you miss that?"

Hiccup paused for a moment before responding "Yeah. I do." She stepped down from the dance platform and started towards the exit.

Jack followed her "You do a lot of stuff with them when you were younger?"

"Oh, yeah." She continued "Derek lives right down the street and he and Scott have known each other since they could crawl, practically. I grew up with both of them around and, sure, they were jerks to me a lot of the time, but they always had my back when I needed them to." She shrugged "I don't know, I guess I have two brothersâ€¦ in a way." Jack nodded "They're still a couple of idiots, though." She added with a giggle.

"They kinda sound it to me." Jack added "Soâ€¦ I think we used the last of our quarters. You wanna go somewhere else or do you want me to take you home?"

Hiccup stopped walking and took her phone out of her pocket and checked the time before slipping it back where it came from and proceeding out the glass door "I still have a bit of time, if you want to grab an ice cream or something?"

"Okay." He smiled "Anywhere you'd prefer?"

She shrugged, stopping at the passenger side of Jack's car "I'm not picky."

"Good." Jack answered "Because I know the best place in town. Andâ€¦ I get a discount."

"Why would you get a discount?" She wondered.

"I know someone who works there." He slipped into the driver's seat and started the engine. Hiccup climbed after him and he drove them off.

* * *

><p>It was only about ten minutes more in the car with Jack before he stopped in front of a small ice cream parlor called The Frozen North. Hiccup had seen the place a few times during car rides, but she'd never stopped inside or anything. After all, she had ice cream at home most of the time, so why bother going to buy something that you already had enough of?<p>

But Jack seemed excited to show her the place, so why not go with him? He was really fun to be around andâ€¦ she kind of didn't want to go back home just yet. There was something about hanging out with Jack that was just enjoyable and she didn't want to part from that just yet.

"You'll love this place; they have so many flavors." Jack's voice pulled her out of her thoughts.

"Do they have mint chocolate chip?" She asked "It's my favorite."

"Yep." Jack stated with a pop of his lips. He opened the big wooden door and held the door open for her, letting it close behind them "Hey, North! You here?" He called.

"Eeeeyy, look who it is." A booming, accented voice sounded from a back room "If it isn't Jack!" A tall teen with dark hair, a matching beard and eyes almost as blue as Jack's stepped through the doorway. He held out his arms in a welcoming fashion, showing off the tattoos decorating each one. He put them down when he noticed Hiccup "And friend?" He leaned on the counter and gave Jack a smirk that was less-than-subtle.

Jack sighed "North, this is my friend, Hiccup. Hiccup, this is North; he's in a few of my classes at school."

"Too bad we don't share lunch, no?" North commented "Only me and Eli in lunch wave."

"Yeah, well, what can you do?" Jack replied "School."

"Yesâ€¦" North trailed off "So, you come to introduce new friend to me or for ice cream?"

"A little of both." Jack chuckled.

"Excellent!" North declared "What can I get you?"

"Get me my usual and Hiccup a cone of your mint chocolate chip." Jack ordered.

"Coming up." The server clapped his giant hands together and started assembling the frozen treats "So, 'iccup" He carried on "How you meet Jack?"

She started brushing her leg over the hardwood floor "I've been going to the library he works and lately and-"

"Ah, see what I tell you, Jack?" North interrupted "Having Sandy get you job at library good thing, yes?"

"I-I guessâ€¦" Jack stammered. Hiccup glanced at him and saw a faint pink begin to flush onto his cheeks. If it was really this awkward for him to introduce a female friend to another friend, why would he even take her to the place he knew the guy would be at?

The Russian teen laughed "I thought so." The bell above the door chimed, signaling that someone else had walked in "Ey, Phil, you come to take over my shift?"

The other two teens turned to see an older man with a thick beard standing in front of the door, glowering at Jack, who smirked in response. After that, he simply grumbled with a nod and disappeared into the back room.

"Okay, then." North reassured as if the guy actually said something "I will be out when I finish this order." He then got back to making the ice creams and held them out a moment later "For Jack, soft serve vanilla cone blue sprinkles." He gave it to Jack "And, for 'iccup" he smiled "cone of mint chocolate chip." And he passed it to her.

Hiccup admired the scoops piled onto the cone for a second before taking some of it into her mouth. Her eyes widened upon the creamy ice cream and bits of chocolate mixing and melting on her tongue. A smile crept onto her face as she swallowed and began to run her tongue over the top scoop some more.

"Is good, yes?" North confirmed. Hiccup nodded.

"See what I meant when I said 'best ice cream in town?'" Jack boasted.

She swallowed "Yeah."

North came to the other side of the counter "So, Jack, would you rather I leave you alone or stay and chat?"

"Uhâ€¦" Jack awkwardly glanced between his taller friend and Hiccup, uncertainty plain on his face. Okay, this was getting kinda weird nowâ€¦ "Do you mind?" He finally asked her.

"Not really." Hiccup shrugged.

North smiled, then slipped a cell phone out of his pocket and his expression flattened "It seems I have to go. Forgot to work on essay." He started to tap the keys on his phone as he walked away "Enjoy, ice cream on me."

Once North left, Jack sat at the table they were standing right next

to and Hiccup sat across from him. "Sorry ifâ€|" He gestured to the counter "any of that weirded you out." He rubbed the back on his neck "I have weird friends."

"You've met my friends; we're even." Hiccup commented.

"That's true." Jack affirmed.

General conversation ensued while the pair devoured their frozen treats, the only interruption being the occasional customer walking in (as it was starting to get too cold out for any normal person to eat ice cream) and Phil eying Jack with a grumble here and there. Hiccup didn't know exactly what the guy had against Jack, but she got the vibe that the silver-haired boy liked to pull pranks and mess with people. That could very well have been the reason.

They stayed in their seats until about an hour and a half after their ice creams were gone and simply conversed some more about school, their friends and the like. Jack ranted for awhile about some guy named Pitch at his school who got suspended for pulling what Jack called the "prank of the year," which involved breaking into the school early and closing every locker in the place with zip ties. Jack dubbed it as an early senior prank, as the guy was supposed to graduate in the coming year and Hiccup was glad this kid didn't go to her school.

Hiccup kept the complaining train going by talking about her history teacher, who everyone called Mildew for a reason that was still unknown to her, and how much he hated almost everyone in the class. Well, everyone except Felix and herself, which usually resulted in Mildew placing the two of them to work together on projects whenever he could. The two of them decided that it was just a way for him to guarantee that he would get at least one really good project out of the "herd of sheep" that he called the rest of the class.

Jack laughed at the last statement as she glanced down at her watch and noticed the time. It was almost five o'clock and that meant it was probably a decent time to go home. And that was because, if she didn't make dinner, Scott would probably burn the house down in the process of trying to do it himself. So, Jack opted to take her home and they piled back into his car.

8. Homecoming Hounding

***Claps hands together* Alright. So... two more new characters this chapter... I hope it's easy enough to tell who they are. I know I'm tossing so many people in this fic really quickly, but I needed some filler and I really hate introductions so I'm trying to get as many over with now as I possibly can. Besides, most of them are just secondary characters, anyway... **

I swear I had no clue what I was doing for half of this chapter and you guys have been waiting long enough for an update, so I figured I'd give you this. I don't even know, I'm in this part of the story where it's hard for me to make progress without fearing I'm going too fast or too slow... Ugh, writing!

Feedback, please... and thank you...?*

* * *

><p>The ride back home with Jack was simply a continuation of the banter they had been engaged in before Hiccup had decided she should get back to the house. She mostly ranted to him about Scott, but it fell on understanding ears when the white-haired boy commented about his sisters in reply. Hiccup couldn't help but laugh when Jack told her about how his older sister, studying to be a dentist, has been poking her fingers into his mouth since his baby teeth started falling out and how his younger sister is currently going through that same phase with her, only the oldest Overland sibling was much more professional this time around.<p>

Almost no time passed between the two of them before they found themselves pulling into the Haddock's driveway. Hiccup noted that, judging by the noise she could just vaguely make out, that Scott was home and taking full advantage of being left alone. She sighed and wondered exactly what he'd been up to while she was out but also had a sense of dread stirring within her. He was never one to throw wild parties or anything, but it would be nice to come home and not find him doing something that they'd later agree not to let their parents know about.

Hiccup unbuckled her seat belt "So, uhâ€¦ thanks for inviting me outâ€¦"

"Yeah." Jack glanced from her to the steering wheel "No problem. I had a lot of fun today."

The brunette smiled "I did too; we should definitely go do that again sometime."

"Sure." The older grinned, showing off his near-perfect smile "I'd like that."

Hiccup tucked a lock of hair behind her ear "So, uhâ€¦" She quickly leaned in and hugged him. Slowly, she felt Jack's arms wrap around her back "See you later, I guess." She pulled away and climbed out of the car.

"See ya'â€¦" She heard Jack call back, almost like he was in shock. Well, she did hug him a little quickly; he might not have seen it coming. She just shrugged it off and stepped inside, praying for the best to be on the other side of the door.

What she was greeted with wasâ€¦ better than expected, anyway. The house looked like it was in one piece, excluding the three extra sets of discarded shoes in the landing and the distant shouts emitting from the living room.

Toothless must have heard the door shutting amongst the noise, as he darted down the hall and jumped on her, resting his massive paws on her shoulders and licking her face with his equally large tongue.

His owner giggled "Hey, Toothless, I'm glad to see you too, bud." Hiccup took the large dog's paws off of her and let him fall back to standing on all four legs "What happened while I was out, huh?"

The dog ticked his head to the side, as if he was trying to

understand what his human was asking of him. He let out a small woof and wagged his tail, nearly knocking over a lamp on an end table with the thing. The brunette moved a few steps over to keep his tail from breaking anything and laughed "Let's go see what Scott's been up to, bud."

Hiccup wandered to the doorway, Toothless on her heels, and peeked into the living room to see Scott, Derek and two of her brother's other friends crowded around the TV, her brother and his best friend getting way too into the football game that was on. Her eyes locked on two half-eaten boxes of pizza sitting on the coffee table, along with barely full bottles of soda and a pile of used paper plates and napkins.

After some screaming about how a false call was made, Scott finally turned his head enough to see her "Oh, hey Henrika!" He awkwardly greeted "Where'd you go?"

"I went to the arcade with a friend." She replied "What's going on here?"

"Derek and I invited Ruth and Terence over to watch the game." Scott gestured to the set of twins on the sofa, who appeared at the house almost as often as Derek did. Both were tall and skinny and had the same shade of sandy blond hair.

Terence had his shaggy hair pulled back in a loose ponytail, as usual, and was lazily sipping at his soda with his feet up on the coffee table. "Hey, Henrika!" He muttered.

Ruth was watching the game more intently than her brother, her long twin braids swinging slightly and she leaned closer to the screen. "There's a seat open, if you wanna watch with us." She offered without looking away from the screen, pointing in the general direction of the empty armchair on the other side of the room.

Hiccup chuckled but declined "I'm fine; I have some things I have to do."

Scott took a bite out of a slice of pizza in his hand "Oh, and," He continued with his mouth full "you don't have to worry about dinner." He swallowed "Maybe you could thank me for taking one chore off of your list, sis?"

She playfully scoffed in reply "Yeah, right. Like I'd give you the satisfaction." She added a smile she purposely showed her metal mouth.

Scott stared at her in confusion for a few seconds before his eyes widened at her "Right. Braces." He looked from the pizza slice to her "I forgot about that."

"I figured." Hiccup rolled her eyes "I'll just heat up some leftovers from the fridge, I guess."

The older Haddock opened his mouth to say something else but was cut off "Oh, come on!" Derek shouted, standing up and throwing up his arms in exasperation "That was a foul!"

"I swear," Ruth added "someone paid off the refs."

"This is just what we get for rooting for the Vikings." Terence drawled "They've only won one game so far this season."

"What does that have to do with anything?" Scott defended, throwing himself back into the conversation "It's been pretty close a few times."

"I'm just saying that the one time you put money on them winning is when they're gonna do nothing but lose." Terence carried on "If you want your team to win, don't jinx it by betting on them."

Hiccup's brows knitted together quizzically "You bet on the games?" She asked, genuinely surprised "Since when?"

"Since dad let me in on the pool going on where he works." Scott admitted.

Hiccup lightly shook her head "You're an idiot." She patted her thigh and strode down the hall, Toothless following her as she went "Alright, bud, I'll feed you first." The dog perked up at the words and barked happily as his human pulled a bag of dog food that was half her size out of the hall closet and snagged the dog's food bowl from its place on the kitchen floor. She filled the bowl to the dog's usual amount and placed it back where she got it, Toothless instantly jumping on the opportunity to feast on his dinner. While he was busy with that, Hiccup re-filled his water bowl and put it down next to his food. "There ya' go, bud."

Leaving Toothless to his meal, Hiccup opened the fridge and sifted through the leftovers inside of it. Finding some of Thursday's macaroni, she popped it in the microwave and sat herself at the table after it was heated up; a great accomplishment, considering the plate came out twice as hot as the food did. A few minutes of silent eating passed before she heard the clacking of Toothless' nails on the hardwood and feeling him plop down next to her chair. The brunette glanced at the dog and found him staring at the area of the floor around her. He was obviously hoping for her to drop a few scraps, even though he'd literally just eaten.

"Go lie down, bud." She commanded. The dog stood and decided that planting himself on the floor after taking two steps away from his owner was good enough. Hiccup giggled at the canine "Yes, guard me from the people screaming at the football game." She softly laughed.

With Toothless exchanging his gaze between Hiccup and the doorway, she finished her dinner, slipped the plate in the sink and made her way upstairs to her bedroom. It took a minute, but she eventually heard the Great Dane following her once again, like the shadow that he was, and assuming his place on Hiccup's bed as she sat at her desk and finally started to work on the last assignment she'd been procrastinating all weekend. Might as well try to stay on Mildew's good side, right?

* * *

><p>Jack stumbled through the front door in a bit of a daze. He'd gotten plenty of hugs before in his lifetime, but none have had an&e|

energy like Hiccup's did. Her touch was like a tiny electric shock down his spine, heating his skin and giving him an embarrassingly delayed reaction to her good byeâ€¦ He'd kick himself about that later, though. If anything, this confirmed that the boy really did have an attraction to the girl with eyes like a summer meadow.<p>

_Greatâ€¦ _Jack sighed, collapsing on the couch the second he turned the corner _Now what do I do with thisâ€¦? _

He stayed motionless on the sofa, his face pressed into the cushion, for a few minutes before he felt a gentle hand start to rub a circle on his back "So," It was Anna, no surprise there "how was your date with Henrika?"

"I told you, it wasn't a dateâ€¦" The younger Overland muttered into the couch.

"The question still applies." Anna claimed.

Jack sighed and rolled onto his back so that she could understand him better "It was greatâ€¦ fun. I took her to the arcade and then we went to The Frozen North and North gave us a discount on ice cream."

"Okay, then why are you mooney?" His sister questioned "Sounds like your day went really well."

"Becauseâ€¦" Jack pondered his wording for a moment "what do I do now?"

"Stay friends for awhile, like you wanted." She told him "Spend more time with her before you decide what you wanna do." Hearing her brother sigh again made the dental student roll her eyes "And make sure she's not dating anyone else before you do anything major?"

"Yeah, yeahâ€¦" Anna twisting her nimble fingers through his bleached locks gave a small calming effect to Jack "This is a mess."

"I know." Anna giggled "I know."

* * *

><p>Well, that job was done in about a half an hour. Hiccup had to think of something else to do, now that all of her chores and school work for the day had been completed. With no better options, she decided to join the group of upperclassmen for the remainder of the game. She wouldn't call herself a football fan, exactly, but the men of the house had a passion for it so she and her mother had picked up on the rules and the best teams over the years. But when your house was the one that threw the annual Super Bowl parties and you had to listen to father and son rant about which teams would make it to said event every season, you'd pick up some tidbits too.<p>

It wasn't as fun as the video game competitions that the older teens would let her in on, but it still entertained her nonetheless. Terence's jinxing theory was proven wrong when the Vikings pulled through with a win. A slim one, but still a win. It looked like Scott wasn't going to lose _all_ of his money in the pool, anyway. And the

guys and Ruth all gave a shout of joy at the victory while Hiccup just admired the scene with a growing smile.

The wave of excitement didn't have much time to dissipate away, though. Five minutes after the game ended, a booming voice called out from the kitchen "Who won, son?!" It was their father, Stefan. Right, he had to miss the game to spend time with Val today—he didn't mind at all, don't get him wrong on that. But every time he'd come home from an outing with her after a game, he'd be shouting for Scott to tell him who was the winner.

Scott shouted back "The Vikings pulled through at the last minute! We're not broke!"

Stefan's tall, muscular form came through the doorway excitedly "Really? It's about time! I thought the losing streak would have kept going."

"Someone finally called out the refs on a false call." Derek explained "After that, it was smooth sailing."

Stefan chuckled "Maybe we should have listened to Ruth sooner."

Said girl threw her arms up for effect "I've been saying that for weeks but _nooo_, you guys didn't wanna listen."

Hiccup decided to make herself scarce from the sports rant ensuing in front of her and slinked back into the kitchen, deciding to go back up to her room. On her way, she found Val putting her jacket on the coat rack and Toothless watching her intently.

She turned and greeted the dog "Hey, Toothless~." He ran towards her and received praise in response. Val turned her gaze to her daughter, Toothless now distracted "So, you and Scott behave yourselves today?"

"For the most part." Hiccup shrugged "Unless you count the football frenzy—" The two shared a humorous look, each shaking their head. Let's just say that having friends over at random became a regular thing for the Haddock house—"What'd you and Dad wind up doing?"

"Same old, same old." Val smiled "What'd you do today?" She casually asked, gently tapping Toothless to tell him to go away.

Hiccup shrugged in response "Eh, not much. Scott took me out for lunch and then I hung out with Jack—"

"Jack?" Her mother repeated, suddenly becoming more interested in the conversation.

"Yeah." Hiccup confirmed "Why? Is that a problem—?"

"Hmm—" Val twirled a lock of her auburn hair around a finger "No, it's not. But—didn't he go bowling with you and your friends last night?"

"Yeah, why?" Hiccup repeated.

Val smirked "I think you know why, Henrika."

Hiccup mulled over the comment before realizing what her mother meant by it "Wha-, uh, no." She sputtered "No, we're just friends. It's nothing like that."

"You sure?" Her mother teased, gently shoving her arm.

"Mom, I've only known him for a few weeks." Hiccup pointed out "I barely know him."

Val seemed to be thinking about what to say next, leaning her elbows on the counter and tapping her nails on the surface. Then, the tapping stopped "Can you tell me a few things you do know about him?"

"Do I have to?" Her daughter moaned. A nod from Val clarified that she wouldn't be left alone until she spilled some details "Okayâ€|" Hiccup thought about the white-haired male for a moment, trying to think of what to say about him "Well, he's a few inches taller than meâ€| about a year older than meâ€| he dyes his hair white for some reasonâ€|" Val encouraged her to go on, leaning in a bit closer with a smile "He likes to play games and he gets really competitive over them, even though I beat him almost every round."

Her mother laughed at the comment "Is he cute?" She poked.

It took Hiccup a moment to process the question, to which she answered with a shrug "I don't know. He's not bad-looking or anything butâ€|" She shifted her weight from one foot to the other "I don't knowâ€|"

Val giggled "You don't really care about that, do you?"

"Not really." Hiccup honestly replied "He seems like a nice person, so I'm hanging out with him. It's as simple as that."

"Okay," Val giggled as she stood up straight again "I'll stop torturing you."

"Thank you." Hiccup sighed, seizing the opportunity to retreat back up to her bedroom. Though, with more difficulty this time than last. There'd always been this problem with the door to her room that everyone had been procrastinating getting fixed. Sometimes, when she closed the door, it would stick and take a pretty hard yank or two to re-open. She'd gotten used to it over the past year, but it was an annoyance nonetheless. She was sure she'd get her father to fix it at some pointâ€| when he actually had some free time on his hands.

Oh well, it wasn't that big of a deal. She was probably getting some muscle from forcing the door open regularly, anyway. Glancing at the clock, Hiccup decided that it was a decent time to slip into her pajamas and did just that, an over-sized dragon t-shirt and sweatpants sufficing as such. Then, she packed up her backpack for school the next day and, when she got to the book that she'd probably finish during school tomorrow, decided that she'd stop by the library and visit Jack again. Maybe they could talk for a bit, if he wasn't too busy.

Laying in bed that night, her mother's questions and demand for details raced through her mind. It was innocent enough that the two

of them liked spending time together, right? There wasn't anything that suspicious in two people hanging out together. But she did know one thing for sure. That she really did like spending the weekend around the older teen.

She was just confused about why others seemed to think that there was something more to it than that. There was nothing wrong with a boy and a girl being friends, especially when she already had quite a few male friends, some thanks to Scott always having people over and letting her get involved in what they were doing. But why did people think that Jack was any different? They spent most of a weekend together, sure. But they were just friends.

Right?

9. Scholastic Support

****Hooray, new chapter~! ****

****So, school, other things, blah, blah, blah, usual excuses. I'll save you the speech this time around.****

****But I did have some problems with this chapter because, well... I got to Hiccup and Jack being all "what do?" faster than I thought I would. So... I had to rethink pretty much everything from this chapter until the next big plot point happens. So, if this chapter's kinda awkward or anything... please bear with me. At least I sort of know what I'm doing for the next chapter now.****

* * *

><p>"Okay, but why are you telling *me* all of this?" Felix whined as he swapped out books in his locker for their next class "I mean, Astrid and Cam probably know a lot more about this than I ever would."

It had been about a week since Hiccup's mind had set her thoughts about Jack on replay; and she was beginning to think that her unorganized notes weren't going to go away anytime soon. She had to talk to someone about this.

"Because," She leaned against the locker next to his "Astrid would probably bust me more than help me and Cam probably couldn't care less; she just sees Jack as good competition for bowling nights."

"So, you turn to me?" He closed his locker "Why, exactly?"

The two started strolling down the hall "I don't know" the brunette admitted "I guess I just knew you wouldn't laugh or brush it off." She shrugged.

"Look, Hiccup," the blond started "I'm just as blind to these kinds of things as you are. If not, more." A sigh from the girl prompted him to continue "But I do know that Jack likes hanging out with us. And he gives me weird looks from time to time."

"Weird how?" Hiccup pressed on.

"I've noticed that sometimes he looks at me likeâ€¦ he's watching me." He explained "At first, I thought he was just confused about why I was the only other guy at bowling night."

"You're not always the only one." She pointed out. She mumbled a cuss under her breath when they got caught behind a group of kids who decided now was a great time to stop walking.

"I know." Felix replied "But I also noticed that he does it more when I'm close to you, especially."

Hiccup raised an eyebrow "What does that prove?" She saw an opening in the crowd and decided to slip through it.

Felix cautiously followed her and found the shorter teen waiting for him on the other side of the clog "I'm not sure. But maybe he's trying to see if we'reâ€¦ ya' knowâ€¦ a thingâ€¦?"

Hiccup stared blankly at him "Really?" She spat back "Why does everyone think that?" She started to walk again.

The blond walked faster in order to catch up with her "â€¦ Do you remember middle schoolâ€¦?" He practically whispered in the brunette's ear.

"Felix, that was, what, three years ago?" Hiccup recalled.

"But people still remember it."

"I know." Hiccup mumbled "It was the talk of the school for a weekâ€¦"

The pair saw their classroom coming up and walked a little slower "Besides, you know how rumors are. The story changes by the day."

She sighed "Yeahâ€¦"

"We'll talk about this at lunch or something, okay?" The husky teen stated. Hiccup nodded.

"Turning your homework in on time for once, Miss Hofferson." Mildew's voice was, as always, the first thing that they heard when she entered his classroom. She and Felix walked in on Cam turning in some homework, apparently what was due today.

"Yeah, I'm surprised myself." The messy blonde replied plainly before turning and taking her seat, right in front of the old man's own desk. "Hey, guys." She called when she saw the other two stepping inside the room.

"Hey." Hiccup responded. She slid a few stapled papers out of her textbook and placed them on the teacher's desk. Felix did the same.

"Thank you, Henrika, Felix." Mildew said with a rasp "You two never disappoint."

"Thank you, sir." Felix made a small, clearly forced smile before he

made his way to his seat, one of the front corner desks.

Hiccup followed and slid into the one next to him "I swear, even him." She whispered "He puts us together every chance he has."

"Maybe it's just because we're good workers." The blond substituted "Ya know, so he has at least one good grade in his pile every day."

The brunette rolled her eyes "Maybe."

* * *

><p>When Jack left school that day, he had a feeling that it was going to be a good shift. Because, for the first time in quite awhile, Jack had the same working hours as his friend, Sandy. He was in college, but he was so short that some have assumed that he's in either high school or even middle school. He often spiked up his bright blond hair, perhaps in an attempt to gain some height, and he had faint freckles on his cheeks. Sandy was always a happy guy, to say the least. He loved kids, especially, and enjoyed seeing them come into the library to poke around the bookshelves. It was easier to just say that he liked having the job much more than Jack ever has.<p>

In fact, Sandy was the one who talked Harry into hiring Jack in the first place. Sometimes he honestly wondered if Harry ever regretted listening to Sandy that day. After all, Jack was a bit of a trouble-maker when he got bored and he absolutely hated having to be as quiet as possible while he was working. But at least the guy hadn't fired him or anything yet.

Sandy actually seemed to have an advantage point that more than likely contributed to him getting the job. He was mute, making him near-perfect for working in a place where you're supposed to be quiet. Most of the time, he didn't even have to explain to customers that he couldn't talk. Normally, he just writes what he needs to say in a notebook that he always carries with him. Jack guessed that people simply thought "Oh, it's a library. He's being respectful of people trying to read" and left it at that. But whatever floats their boat, right?

Afternoons with Sandy in the library were much more entertaining than days where Jack was either by himself or sharing a shift with this guy named Querty. Jack never knew if that was his real name or not, really. He was an older man, assumingly a friend of Harry's that shares a love of books. He was a taller man with a bald head and a white beard decorating his chin. He always wore these glasses that just screamed "Harry Potter" to the white-haired teenager every time he looked at them. And, for some odd reason, he always wore a suit, or something close to one, to work.

It wasn't that Querty was bad, exactly; the guy usually kept to himself amongst the shelves. But it was kind of like working with two sides of a split personality; Harry being the tougher bookworm and Querty being the one that was easier to deal with; or maybe Querty was the butterfly to Harry's angry caterpillar... The only thing that really confused Jack about Querty was that he was always re-organizing the books after Jack had just put them away. So he

didn't put them back in alphabetical order all the time; did it really matter that much? They were in the correct general area; people could still find them alright.

At least Sandy was fun. The two boys were playing rounds of Hangman and Tic Tac Toe in the mute's notebook when Hiccup came in and walked up to the desk.

"Hey, Jack." She greeted, smile partly showing her braced teeth.

Jack looked up from the book "Oh, hey Hiccup. I uhâ€¦ I didn't expect you here so soon."

She gave a confused look and glanced at the clock on the wall "It's my normal time."

"Right, rightâ€¦" Jack stammered "I just lost track of time hanging out with my pal Sandy." He gestured to the blond, who shyly waved her way.

Hiccup smiled at him and he turned the notebook to a clean page. After scribbling something down, he held it up. _Nice to meet you. :) _Another confused look from the girl prompted him to write more _I'm mute. Can't talk._

"Oh." Hiccup's eyes widened a bit "Sorry, I-"

Sandy rapidly shook his head and jotted down another sentence _It's fine, really. It happens all the time. _Hiccup nodded, still appearing awkward from the exchange.

"So," Jack interjected "you picking up another book or are you just studying?"

"I have some homework to get done." The brunette explained "Maybe I'll pick up the next book afterwards."

"Which one are you on again?" He questioned.

"Umâ€¦" She bit her lower lip "_A Hero's Guide to Deadly Dragons_ is the next one I need."

"I'll put it aside for you, then." The silver-haired boy responded.

Hiccup smiled "Thanks." And made her way over to her usual spot. Jack watched her until she was seated and had her books out in front of her.

Then, he felt a tap on his shoulder. His face was met with another clean page of notebook, _Is she your friend orâ€¦? _Being the only thing on it. Man, did Sandy need to learn to write smaller.

"Yeah, she'sâ€¦ just a friendâ€¦" Jack felt his face begin to warm.

A small cough emanated from Sandy's throat as he wrote again; that seemed to be how he laughed _You like her don't you? _He held up the notebook with a smirk.

"Huh?" The blond puffed out his cheeks and underlined _like _"Ohâ€|
uhâ€|" Jack looked away "I might have a thing for herâ€| I
guessâ€|"

The older boy rolled his eyes _Yeah, sure. You __guess._

The younger sighed "Okay, you got me. Happy now?" The smug jerk
nodded "Go on, laugh it up."

After a minute of what Jack thought was waiting for Sandy to stop
silently laughing at him, he felt another tap on his back. He turned
and found Sandy's latest sentence read _You can go hang out with her
when your shift's almost done, if you want. I'll cover for
you._

"You sure, Sandy?" Jack asked "I don't want to get either of us in
trouble."

Sandy nodded happily _It looks like you really like her. You should
talk to her._

Jack just knew that he was blushing again "Okayâ€|"

* * *

><p>A few hours later, Jack's shift had only about an hour or so to
go and Sandy waddled from the pile of books he was loading onto a
cart and tapped Jack again. He pointed Hiccup's way, never taking his
eyes off of his co-worker.<p>

Jack looked from him to her uncertainly "What am I even going to say
to her?"

Sandy sighed and pulled his notebook off of the desk _You got off
early. _He glanced behind Jack's chair and saw his backpack _Tell her
you want to do homework together. Maybe ask for help? _He
shrugged.

Jack thought for a moment before his eyes widened "Sandy, you're a
genius." he grabbed his bag and speed-walked to Hiccup's table,
slowing down as he approached her.

Hiccup looked up from her work "Hey, Jack. What's up?"

"Well, I got off early today and I was wondering if we could study
together?" He scratched the back of his neck awkwardly.

Hiccup smiled "Sure." The older teen sat down next to her and slipped
a few books out of his backpack "What are you gonna work on?" She
wondered aloud.

"History." He muttered "Might as well get it out of the way."

"I take it you don't like history that much?"

"It's boring." Jack complained.

"Maybe it's just the way that it was taught to you." The brunette
inferred "I mean, my history teacher's not the best either. But he

gives us really cool projects. Felix and I did a video project about the Vikings last year and we got the highest grade in the class for it."

"How long was it?"

"Ten minutes." Hiccup stated "We had a lot of ideas, so we wound up making it about twice as long as it needed to be." She smiled "Cam and Astrid even made an appearance in it for us."

"Sounds like you had fun." Jack confirmed.

"Maybe you can help us with the next project, depending on what it's about." She offered.

"Yeah, sure."

Hiccup turned back to her work, which was some kind of math that made Jack's head spin just looking at it. He returned to his own homework and quiet settled between the two of them for several minutes and Jack did a grand total of one question in that time. Something about the Cold War starting or something. God, he hated history! And he hated the silence of the near-empty library even more when Hiccup was next to him and they weren't talking.

He glanced back at her, in some attempt to see if she was just as bored as he was. Hiccup was staring at the pages of the book, her eyes twitching slightly as they scanned the words and examples on them. She had her head propped up on her right hand while her left held her pencil up to mouth, allowing her to nibble on her dragon eraser's horns. Now that Jack looked at the tiny dragon, it looked like its horns actually looked more realistic with the dents that Hiccup's teeth had left on them.

She looked peaceful as she was, like she was more than content doing the work. Students like that had always baffled Jack. Like, how could they actually take some sort of pleasure out of doing more work after eight hours of doing the same stuff in school? Especially considering that he had a job; Jack avoided doing extra labor whenever he could. Meanwhile, Hiccup was breezing through her work and he couldn't find one sign that showed that she didn't want to do it.

But, at the same time she was sort of interesting to watch. And he found himself looking her over while she wrote on, unaware of the older boy's sight being locked on her. Jack had never noticed that she was left-handed until then; Hiccup was the first person he'd ever met who was, believe it or not. And it turned out that she had more freckles than he thought, as he saw them decorating her hands as well. And looking closer at her face told Jack that she had a little scar on her chin. It looked sort of like a scratch, one that was probably put there in some accidental endeavor. There must be a story behind it.

Okay, so Jack was doing a different kind of studying. But at least he was learning something. One thing he didn't master, however, was what signs meant it was probably a good time to look away and pretend he wasn't staring.

Hiccup's eyes fluttered open and shut a few times, the meadows in her

eyes getting a bit of focus back in them. Then, out of the corner of her left eye, her pupil landed on Jack "Hmm?" She turned her head his way, pulling him out of his trance with surprise "Something wrong?"

"Uhâ€|" Jack stammered "The Cold War was in the winterâ€| rightâ€|?"

â€|And that's when Jack mentally slapped himself in the faceâ€| He gave an awkward smile and hoped that she would just brush that question off.

After a brief blank stare, she cracked a crooked smile and shook her head "No. It happened for a lot longer than one winter."

"â€|Ohâ€|"

She quietly laughed "Do you need some help? History's kindaâ€| one of my better subjects."

"Uh, yeah, that would help." He chuckled.

Hiccup placed her notebook inside her textbook and closed it, so she wouldn't lose her page, and scooted her chair closer to Jack. "Okay. What do you need?"

Jack looked back at the questions "Umâ€| why it happened." He claimed.

A sly look appeared on her face. It was probably one she hoped the older teen didn't notice because it was replaced with a blank expression before she replied "It was the United States and Russia having a contest to see who was the bigger dick and neither of them wanted to take off their pants." With the straightest face that Jack had ever seen and a tone to match, as if it was basic conversation.

Jack wanted to laugh so hard; he really did. He wanted to burst into a laughing fit and roll around on the floor clenching his stomach. But, uhâ€| he'd probably get kicked out and fired pretty quickly if he'd done that. So, he settled for folding his arms over his books and letting out his amusement on the fabric of his hoodie "What?" He somehow said in-between sputters and suppressed laughs into his sleeve.

"That's basically what it was." Hiccup declared, a few miniscule laughs slipping from her lips as well.

After a few deep breaths, Jack managed to regain enough self control to speak again "I don't think my teacher'll accept that on my homework." He chuckled.

The brunette let out a final giggle "I guess not."

The next hour progressed in the same general manner, with Jack asking for questions he couldn't find the answers to and Hiccup giving some kind of joke before explaining the real answer. It seemed that Hiccup's jokes took on only one of two forms: silly or dirty. It actually made Jack wonder how such a nice-looking girl knew so many

puns that would be better suited to come out of the mouth of a teenage boy. But, then again, he'd already learned that Hiccup wasn't exactly the stereotypical mold for a fifteen-year-old girl awhile ago.

Even so, the more Jack got to know her, the more he liked spending time with her. Hiccup was smart, amusing, funny, and, of course, really nice to look at. And every time that Jack learned something new about her, it seemed like there was another reason to find her interesting. It was almost like digging in the sand and finding a cool-looking sea shell or a trinket that someone had dropped who-knows-how-long-ago every time he decided to take his shovel and make another hole.

The slacking library attendant glanced up at the clock and noticed that it was 9:00. Well, at least he didn't have to worry about being yelled at for slacking work anymore. But then he thought about it some more—shouldn't Hiccup have gone home, like, a half hour ago? That was when she usually left, anyway. If not, earlier.

And, as if the universe knew exactly where he was going with that thought, he heard the library door open and heavy footsteps coming further inside. Jack peered through his bangs at the strange boy. He was clearly taller than the silver-haired teen; Jack could tell that even from a distance. He had scraggly dark brown hair, a nose that kind of reminded Jack of a pig, and muscles that screamed "don't mess with me."

At first, seeing the guy didn't bother him. Lots of different people come into the library, after all. What made Jack a little uneasy was when saw his head turn their way "Henrika."

Hiccup looked up from her papers and gave an awkward smile "Hey~, Scott. Uh—what are you doing here?"

The guy reached the table and leaned closer to eye level with her, resting his elbows on the table "Oh, just taking in some scenery, reminding you of what time it is, that sort of thing."

Hiccup looked at the clock and then back at Scott "Oh crap, I'm so sorry, bro. I lost track of time."

—Bro—? Wait a minute—_this guy_ is her brother? They looked nothing a like; how could they be siblings?

"Let's just get home before mom thinks you got kidnapped or something." Scott ordered. He then turned his gaze Jack's way "Who's this guy, anyway?"

"Oh, uh," She started slipping her books carelessly back into her bag "this is Jack; I was helping him with history. Jack, this is my brother, Scott."

The muscled teen glared down at Jack, looking him over carefully and nodding occasionally. Great. Not only was her brother _huge_, but now he was trying to figure out if the smaller boy was any kind of problem.

"Hi—" Jack practically squeaked. He went to hold out a hand but Scott simply nodded with a firm expression. It was pretty clear he

wasn't gonna shake Jack's hand

The two continued to stare at each other. Scott's pale blue eyes mixed with Jack's bolder shade, robin's egg mixing with the bluest of waters, until the taller was interrupted by a shove to the chest.

"Hey, you're the one who wants to get home so fast." Hiccup poked him again.

"Right" Scott turned his stare from his sister to his current target.

"See you tomorrow ok, Jack?" The brunette smiled back at him. Looking back at her brother, she caught his grimace and flicked his arm. The two walked away, Scott looking over his shoulder one more time before Hiccup whispered "Be nice."

* * *

><p>Oh, and for those who don't know who he is, Querty is the human version of a character in the Guardians of Childhood books. Basically, he's a bookworm who eats all of the knowledge in the world off of books. He later becomes a cocoon and turns into a butterfly-like book. In this form, he's able to turn his pages from blank into whatever story he needs to remember or tell and new information can be written down on them as well.

10. History at the Haddocks'

****Hello, dear readers, I am not dead!****

****I have just been swamped with writer's block and endless amounts of homework and before-break projects for the past month or so, so I have had almost no time to do much of anything that didn't cause me stress. So I took a breather whenever I could and... I didn't write and instead derped around on Tumblr during my free time with the document open. Productive process, right?****

****Anyway, this chapter's one that's longer than usual so I hope that'll convince you guys to forgive me for my incompetence as a writer and not hate me for leaving this fic abandoned abruptly for a month...****

****So, enjoy the chapter~! ****

* * *

><p>So, it had been a solid two weeks since Jack first saw Hiccup's brother and he swore that he was still shaking from the look that guy gave him. Those pale blue eyes were suddenly as deep and dark as an underwater abyss; one filled with hungry sharks, at that. It was pretty clear just from his expression that spending time with Hiccup from then on would be a little bit trickier to say the least.<p>

God, all he wanted to do was talk to the pretty girl he met at work. Now her monster-sized brother's gonna be breathing down his neck whenever he's around. Great just great

"Hey, Frostbite!" Jack was pulled out of his thoughts by his friend's call "Don't leg behind or coach'll be up your ass about it." Jack glanced across the track and saw their PE teacher Savage closely monitoring his students. When the man's eyes landed on the trio, Jack sped up his pace until he was running alongside his classmates again "Better keep up, mate."

Jack looked to his left and gave a smirk to Eli, a class friend of his with green eyes and dark gray hair pulled back in a ponytail, as he ran down the track "You know," he panted "you're usually way ahead of us. Why are you lagging behind this time?"

"I wanna know how it's going with that sheila of yours, uhâ€¦ Hiccup?"

Jack's pace faltered for a second before he picked it back up "How do you know about that?"

Eli cocked his head "North told me last week."

Jack glared at the taller teen on his opposite side "What?" North innocently asked "He wanted to know why you don't complain about work anymore."

"And I heard Jamie and Monty talkin' about it too." Eli claimed.

Jack groaned "Alright, I get it. What do you wanna know?"

"When you're gonna make your move, Frostbite."

Jack blinked "Huh? Wha-"

"Pick up the pace there, Overland!" Savage shouted "I've seen kids do better with a broken leg!"

As they passed the coach, Jack sped up and slowed back to his original pace once he was out of Savage's sight "What are you talking about?" He asked again.

"When you will take 'iccup on a date." North interjected.

"I don't know..." Jack grumbled.

"Whaddaya mean you don't know?" Eli questioned.

"What part didn't you get?"

"She's not gonna wait around forever, ya know." The Aussie prodded.

"Eli is right." North added "Girl like 'iccup could be gone like that." He swiped a hand in front of himself.

"You better do somethin' before some other guy swoops in and gets her." Eli stated "Trust me; you'll be kicking yourself if that happens. I know how that feels."

"Please don't bring my sister into this." Jack complained "Besides,

she's not seeing anyone right now; she broke up with that guy months ago."

"Point still stands."

"Okay, Bunny, explain how I should do this then."

Eli glared at the white-haired boy for a minute, clearly unhappy about that stupid nickname being brought into the conversation "Shouldn't that be a decision you make yourself?"

"I've never asked a girl out before; maybe gimme some pointers, ladies' man!"

"You'll do fine, long as you don't get cold feet."

"Very funny."

Jack had heard North muttering to himself during the argument but thought nothing of it until the taller teen shouted "Idea!" just after they passed Savage another time. Both heads turned to him as he smiled wide "Jack, she helped you study for history, yes?" Jack nodded "Ombric has that test coming up soon. Perhaps you could ask her to help you study?"

"That's actually a good idea, North."

"Yeah, I gotta hand that one to ya, mate." Eli added.

"I try." The dark-haired boy said oh-so-modestly.

"Just keep us posted." Eli ordered "Got it, Frostbite?"

Jack chuckled "Got it, Bunny."

* * *

><p>Jack came into work that day more than anxious. All he wanted was for Hiccup to come through that door so that he could talk to her about studying togetherâ€| but he was also dreading it. What if she said no, or what if she had her friends with her? God, how would he even follow up if she said no?<p>

"Trouble concentrating, Jack?" He came out of his daze to find Querty beside him.

The teen sighed "No, just thinking."

The old man put down his pile of books on the counter "Something bothering you?" Jack shrugged in response "Is this about that girl you're always talking to?"

Jack hung his head and nodded before looking back at his co-worker "Yeah."

Querty looked like he was going to answer him until they both heard the door open and a familiar head of brunette hair trotted inside "Maybe now you can figure it out." Was all he said before he grabbed his books again and disappeared among the shelves.

Hiccup walked up to the desk and greeted him, like always "Hi, Jack." As she smiled, Jack noticed her cheeks were rosy, probably from the chilly air that was beginning to settle outside for the winter. It hid her freckles slightly and made her eyes look brighter than normal too. Jack found himself smiling at the sight; God why'd she have to be so cute?!

"Oh, hey, Hiccup." He lazily waved as she stopped in front of him and pulled her scarf tighter around her neck "Winter's on its way, huh?"

"Yeah." She replied "Jack Frost's coming; that's for sure."

"You know about him too?" Jack asked with surprise.

"Yeah, why wouldn't I?" Hiccup remarked.

"Justâ€¦ almost no one seems to talk about him and he's one of my favorite myths of all time."

"Right?" Hiccup agreed "You'd think more people would be into an ice-wielding spirit who exists in so many cultures."

"I know; he deserves so much more publicity than he gets." Jack continued "Winter's my favorite season; I've gotta love him for bringing it to me every year."

The brunette giggled "You're really into mythology, huh?"

"Love it." The older teen claimed "It's so cool to learn about; all of the stories and how they change everywhere they go in the world. I mean, Jack's a chick in some cultures. That's how diverse it is." Hiccup nodded intently and adjusted the strap of her backpack on her shoulder "Oh, I almost forgot. Can I ask you something?"

Hiccup's eyes widened a bit and brought her full focus back to him "Sure, what's up?"

"Well, I was wonderingâ€¦" He started tapping his fingers on the desk anxiously "Ya' know, since you helped me beforeâ€¦ if maybe you could meet up with me here and help me study for a test in history?"

Green meadows darted to the floor and she chewed her bottom lip while she thought the proposal over "Umâ€¦ what day do you have in mind?"

Jack thought over his schedule quickly before answering "Friday, after school. We could meet here, if that's easier."

Hiccup diverted her gaze again and she sighed "Sorryâ€¦ I can't Friday."

"What do you mean you can't?" Jack asked, wide-eyed.

Hiccup shifted on her feet in front of him, still trying to avoid eye contact "I won't have a ride home, soâ€¦ I can't." She claimed.

Jack sighed under his breath. God, the one day he had open this week and she couldn't make it. How about those odds? Ughâ€¦

Hiccup finally perked her head up after a moment and she looked back at Jack "Oh, um, Scott's dropping me off at home right after school gets out. Then he's going to some training for football or somethingâ€¦ you can come over and I'll help you."

"Uhâ€¦" Jack pondered "Yeah, sure, that'll work. â€¦ You're sure your brother won't be aroundâ€¦?"

"Yeah." The brunette clarified with a smirk "Why? Are you scared of him?"

"Yes!" He exclaimed.

Hiccup started to laugh "I promise; he won't do anything to hurt you."

"Okay." Jack agreed "Then it's a date."

* * *

><p>Once Scott dropped her off at the house on Friday, Hiccup spent the next half hour doing some of her own homework before Jack showed up. And about twenty math problems later the clock on her desk read 3:45. Oh man, She bit her bottom lip _he's gonna be here soon._

Hiccup left her other books and brought her history book and notes downstairs with her. And only when she made her way into the living room did she realize how much of a mess it wasâ€¦ again. Scott invited Derek and the twins over to watch another football game the night before. And guess who was too lazy to clean up the mess he made? Yep, Scott. The coffee table was covered in half-empty soda cans and candy wrappers, some were even scattered on the floor, and the couch was just a mess all-together. It basically looked like a few kids tried to build a fort out of the cushions, gave up, and threw the cushions back to their original places.

The brunette sighed as she started to clean it up herself, making an internal note to get back at her brother for this later. At least it didn't take too long to get the room back into a presentable state. But even as she looked over the tidied space, Hiccup didn't think that it was, well, enough. Like there had to be some little things added on before she let her study partner into the house. So, she spent the next five or ten minutes setting up her books on the coffee table, even bothering to open up to the chapter about the Cold War, and leaving paper and pens next to them.

Alright. Now it looked like they were actually going to study.

She was about to grab a bag of chips before she heard the doorbell ring and Toothless running down the hall and barking in response. The Great Dane barreled past her and stopped when he nearly slammed his face into the front door, making the whole house shake with his barking.

"Okay bud, I know." Hiccup soothed as she approached the dog "Someone's here, I got it." She grabbed his collar and held it tightly "Toothless, stay here."

She opened the door and saw Jack standing there with his backpack and

a smile, which faded quickly once Toothless started to bark again and tried to free himself from his master's grip. Jack jumped back at the sight of the canine.

"He won't hurt you." Hiccup stated "He just doesn't know you." She wrestled the giant dog back inside the house and kept him back by holding out an arm and a leg in his way "Come in."

Cautiously, the older teen stepped through the threshold. His eyes never left the dog behind Hiccup and, once the door was closed behind him, a small wave of fear came over him as Toothless ran through Hiccup's barrier. The dog barked and growled for a moment as Jack tensed. Then, both started to relax as Toothless' giant nose inspected the boy's pant legs, hands, and shirt.

"See?" Hiccup confirmed "He just needs to check you out; make sure you won't hurt me."

Jack chuckled as he gently patted Toothless on the head "Like I would do that, anyway."

Hiccup smiled "He doesn't know that." She turned and started for the kitchen "I'm gonna grab a snack; you can sit on the couch, if you want."

Toothless' footsteps followed her down the corridor. As she knelt down and looked in the cabinet for the chips, the dog stuck his nose inside and started to sniff around.

"Get out of here, Toothless." Hiccup laughed "Nothing for you."

She grabbed the chips and found Jack in the living room admiring the photos hanging on the wall around the TV and mantle. She seemed to catch him by surprise when she walked in, blue eyes widening as if he'd been caught doing something wrong. "Sorry, I was justâ€¦"

Hiccup shrugged it off "It's fine."

Jack looked back at the pictures "How old were you when this was taken?"

She walked to his side and looked at the familiar photo of her and Scott on the wall "I was four and Scott just turned seven. That was the first time I remember going to the beach. My dad's friend Oswald had a condo there at the time and we'd meet him and his family up there for vacations every summer.

"Not anymore?"

"No." Hiccup confirmed "He sold it a few years ago."

Jack scanned over the photos again, all of them showing the Haddock siblings growing up to the present day, and smiled at the picture of the day they got Toothless about a year ago.

"Who would've thought he'd grow into such a giant, huh?" Hiccup commented.

"Yeah."

Silence settled over them and Hiccup found herself awkwardly scratching the back of her neck "So, uhâ€¦" She muttered "wanna get to the studying now orâ€¦?"

"Oh, yeah." Jack answered.

The pair settled themselves on the couch and Jack started to flip open his own books. After that, the two had a decent conversation going about what Jack would have to know for his upcoming test and all of the important events of the age. It was mostly Hiccup explaining the basics of what Jack dished out to her, but the discussion flowed much better than the awkward display about the pictures on the wall. As long as she knew what she was talking about, the brunette didn't have a problem talking about it. But still, sometimes the older teen's expression or tone of voice would make her falter slightly. Occasionally, she'd notice the white-haired boy watching her intently, his features soft and relaxed as if he could listen to her forever. Or he'd ask a question in this weird, almost whispered tone. Whenever she did acknowledge the actions, her speech would slow a little and her hand movements would become less frequent for a moment before she picked them back up and carried on with her speech.

The afternoon carried on as such until Hiccup heard the garage opening outside and the slam of a car door.

Jack noticed she was looking around "Something wrong?"

"Uhâ€¦" Hiccup stuttered "No; just thought I heard something."

The door from the garage to the kitchen opened and shut a minute later "I'm home, sis!" Oh gods; Scott wasn't supposed to be this early! Hiccup looked to Jack and saw his eyes widening in fear. She gave him an apologetic smile and he looked her way with an expression that said 'you lied to me.'

"Hey, bro." Hiccup nervously called back "I thought you were still at practice orâ€¦ whatever it is you were doing."

"Yeah, but class- uh, practice was called short today." Her brother responded; his voice and footsteps coming closer "Where are you, anyway?"

"Uhâ€¦" Hiccup looked from the doorways to Jack "in the living room."

Scott came into view a moment later and his eyes locked onto Jack "You didn't tell me you were having company today."

"I didn't think you'd be home." She defended "So I thought it wouldn't matter." Scott nodded "Jack just wanted some help studying for a test."

"Uh huhâ€¦" The older sibling mumbled "Well, I have some stuff to do soâ€¦ I'll be around." He turned to walk away, and then looked back "Don't do anything stupid."

Hiccup sighed "Really, Snot Face?" She heard Jack chuckle at the nickname.

"Just saying." Scott held his arms up and backed away "I don't wanna have to pick up a mess or hide a body or anything today."

The brunette rolled her eyes and turned back to Jack, who was watching the doorway until Scott fell out of his sight "Don't worry about him." She explained "He won't do anything if there's witnesses around." The comment didn't seem to make the older boy feel any better and Hiccup giggled "I'm kidding; relax. He's like Toothless; his bark's worse than his bite."

Jack looked at the Great Dane on the floor beside him and cracked a smile when he looked back at her "Remind me not to get on your bad side."

"Damn right." Hiccup gently pushed Jack's shoulder "Let's get back to the twentieth century now, okay?"

"Yeahâ€|" Jack slid closer to her, still glancing around the room. But they settled back into their study mode fairly quickly.

And Hiccup thought that was that. She and Jack would, for the most part, be undisturbed while they were working. Boy, was she wrong. She knew that her brother was going to make an attempt or two to "keep an eye on her" but she didn't expect what actually happened over the course of the afternoon.

Scott's first attempt seemed harmless enough. He wandered into the living room in his wife beater and gym shorts, lifting his dumbbells and counting the lifts as he walked around. He paced through the rooms on the first floor for a few minutes before he started to loiter around the couch. Then, he tried to make conversation any way he could, probably just to spite their poor house guest.

"So, Jackâ€|" Scott started with a grunt "how much you bench?" When Jack made a face of confusion, he sighed "How much do you lift?"

"Uhâ€| I dunnoâ€|" Jack replied plainly "I don't really lift weights."

"Really?" Scott questioned "Weak. These right here," he stepped closer to Jack and held one of his weights in front of him "They're forty pounds each. Moving up to fifty pretty soon." He stepped back and let his arms hang at his sides before he started again "Keep that in mind, Jack."

Then he walked out, probably back to the garage, and the pair didn't hear from him for a little while. But just as Hiccup thought her brother had had his fun messing with Jack, he came back carrying a plastic bag and explained he was "cleaning up from his party last night," which Hiccup knew was complete crap. She was the one that cleaned up most of it, after all.

Hiccup watched him for a minute before she asked "Scott, what are you doing?"

"Just cleaning the mantle; don't mind me."

"Ok, so now you care about cleanliness?" She snarked.

"Well, I mean, you did so great picking up in here, I'd hate for something else to get dirty in here." He pushed another soda can into the bag and looked back at the two teens who were trying to study. Scott gave Jack a look, to which Hiccup saw him tense out of the corner of her eye.

Hiccup groaned "We can't focus with you wandering around; can't you go somewhere else?"

"I will." He assured "Just once I'm done in here."

And Scott left the room, as promised, after the cans were off the mantle. Then, he climbed the stairs and most likely went up to his room. Hiccup breathed a sigh of relief at that. Maybe now they could actually get some more work done. It was clear at this point that Jack was nowhere near ready for this test of his and the constant interruptions weren't helping the cause at all. At the rate they were going, he'd need more than one study session to be able to pass.

It may have been weird to think butâ€¦ Hiccup was hoping for that. She didn't want him to flunk, of course, but hanging out with Jack like this, alone, occasionally going off-topic about nothing in particular; it was an idea that was growing on her. Jack's presence was just becoming more welcome to her as they spent more time together. Andâ€¦ she kind of didn't want him to leave. So, she may or may not have "lost track of time" while they were going over notes and adding in facts Jack had previously left out.

What? He didn't have to go anywhere but home today; she could take up a little more of his time if she wanted. Jack sure wasn't complainingâ€¦ at least, not about being with her. The studying was another story. The guy was like a giant five-year-old sometimes; wanting to take snack breaks every so often and insisting she reward him by playing video games later. Well, he could be worse. He could actually be five years old.

Besides the loud rock music blasting from Scott's bedroom, the duo remained uninterrupted for quite some time. Then Jack decided to call another break so that they could play video games. Damn, she should have hid the Wiiâ€¦ but whatever; they'd been at it for a few hours. Hiccup guessed that they could use a bit of fun after burying their faces in books. So, she turned on the game system and started sifting through the stack of games that were stuffed in the compartment in the ottoman.

Her search was called short when Jack exclaimed "You have Mario Kart too?"

Hiccup turned to him wide-eyed "Yeahâ€¦ why, you like that game?"

"You kidding?" He asked excitedly "I love these games!" Then, he smirked "You any good?"

"Am I any good?" The brunette chuckled back "Scott and I have been competing against each other for the top spot for years."

"Who's on top right now?"

"Me." Hiccup stated proudly "Kicked his ass on Rainbow Road last time we played."

Jack laughed "That's just cold; only Satan would choose Rainbow Road in multi-player."

Braced teeth flashed in a smile "Guilty as charged." Hiccup reached into the ottoman again and pulled out a second controller "Do you use the steering wheel of the joystick? Those are all we got."

"Joystick." The white-haired boy answered "Who uses the steering wheel mode?"

Hiccup handed him the joystick "Well," she grabbed the remote off the top of the console "I do."

"â€|Ohâ€|"

And then they spent an unknown amount of time sitting beside each other on the floor, their eyes never leaving the screen as they raced through track after track. Hiccup had to admit that Jack as Yoshi was pretty good competition; but he was still at pretty good odds with her as Drybones. Not to mention, she was pretty good at drifting around the corners and gaining speed boosts in the process. After four competitions, they were at a tie and Hiccup finally got Jack back to studying.

But she only remember what time it was when she heard the front door open and close, along with the loud footsteps the resonated in the landing.

"Scott, Henrika!" Her father called out "I'm home! Your mother'll be working late tonight; so what do you say we-" he entered the living room and saw Hiccup and Jack "â€| go out for dinnerâ€|" He looked from his daughter to the stranger "Henrikaâ€| who's this?"

* * *

><p>Fear.<p>

That is the only way that Jack could describe what he felt when he saw Hiccup's behemoth of a father come walking into the room and have his dark green eyes settle on him, tracing his every move and occasionally flicking to the brunette beside him.

Jack gulped as he looked over the man towering above him; a short-sleeved shirt exposing massive arms and shorts showing off legs in the same condition were all that he was dressed in, besides his sneakers. Short, fiery red hair traced his face and flowed into a mustache and unkempt beard that almost completely hid the man's mouth. It contrasted his eyes and made them stand out even more; and Jack could feel the rays emitting from Mr. Haddock's stern face as he fumbled to say anything.

God, wasn't her monster of a brother enough to deal with? At the rate this was going, Jack wouldn't be surprised if her mother was just as big as the rest of her family.

"Uh, Dad, this is Jack. He's a new friend." Hiccup explained "He

wanted help with history, so we planned a study session."

Mr. Haddock nodded "I see. Nice to meet you, Jack."

He held out a meaty hand and his house guest cautiously took it "You tooâ€|"

The handshake that followed was one that Jack would swear was aiming for tearing his arm off, judging by the amount of force put behind it. He tried to not wince as Hiccup's father released him, his arm flopping on the couch and refusing to move for a few seconds.

_Yep. _Jack thought_ This guy's trying to kill me._

The red headed man looked at the TV screen "And you're also studying video games?"

"That was us taking a break." Hiccup answered "Jack's great competition; it sure was different than playing against Scott."

More footsteps rang out and Scott dashed down the stairs excitedly "I heard we're going out for dinner?"

"Yes." Mr. Haddock replied "Your mother won't be home until late tonight and I don't feel like cooking." He looked at Hiccup "And you don't look like you want to either."

"Not really, no." Hiccup admitted.

"So any ideas where we're going?" Scott questioned "'Cause I'm in the mood for that buffet near the movie theater."

"I don't care." Hiccup shrugged "Dad, your call."

"I could go for some of their roast." He mused "Okay, dinner's settled. Was Jack planning on staying?"

"Uhâ€|" She glanced at Jack, looking for an answer.

"Actually, uhâ€|" The older teen started "I was thinking about heading out soon anyway, soâ€| thank you, but no."

"Alright then." Mr. Haddock affirmed "Good to meet you, Jack." He started for the stairs "Just let me get out of my work clothes and we'll go."

"I should probably do the same." Scott added as he followed his father to the second floor. Yes, the guy was still wearing his wife-beater and shorts.

"Work clothes?" The white-haired boy questioned.

"He's a personal trainer." Hiccup explained "I'm actually surprised he's home now; his hours are all over the place."

Jack nodded.

"You don't have to go." She continued "My parents don't mind dragging friends along or anything."

"Yeah, I justâ€|" Jack started to collect his things and shove them into his bag "I don't want to impose orâ€| anything; I've been here long enough already."

"Okayâ€|" The brunette agreed "So I'll see you later, then?"

"Definitely." He claimed as he zipped his bag shut "I'll text you later too, if you want."

"Sure." She smiled "I think we need to set up another day to study, anyway. You're worse at history than I thought."

Jack chuckled "I'm hopeless at the subject."

"I doubt that." She stood and followed him to the front door, gripping Toothless' collar when he came after them
"Bye."

"Bye."

Jack shut the door behind him so that the dog wouldn't get outâ€| and then bolted into his car in record time and decided that Eli was gonna get an earful about his _brilliant _plan when he got home.

11. From Clueless to Convinced

****Hi~! ****

****I'm just gonna leave this here because... I don't have much to say besides this chapter's longer than normal and I hope you guys enjoy it. Also, new characters again! ****

*** * ***

><p>The next two weeks until Jack's history test were filled with study sessions whenever he and Hiccup could find the time to get together for one. For the most part, the next lessons took place in the library, which Jack was very thankful for. But there was one more time that the brunette arranged for it to be at her house again and Jack internally groaned at the idea. He really didn't want to get glared at by the monsters that she calls her brother and father. But it had to be done, if Jack wanted to pass. So, he pulled up to the brick building on another one of his days off and met the freckled girl and her gigantic dog at the front door again.

The afternoon started just like the previous one, with the two alone and keeping distractions down to a minimum. The only real problem was when Toothless came into the living room with a large squeaky toy in his mouth and was throwing it around, "asking the humans to play with him before he breaks something," as Hiccup put it. She grabbed the other end of the toy and threw it down the hall, allowing her enough time to throw on her jacket and tell Jack to follow her into the back yard. He guessed that was the only place where the Great Dane could get exercise without the risk of knocking anything of importance over. Jack and Hiccup played a game of Keep Away with the canine until he became a black blur running in the grass and he rammed straight into the small girl. The older teen feared she got hurt

until her laugh resonated through the air. Toothless responded by licking her face and Jack joined in on the laughter. But after that, they settled to just play fetch with the dog and stop teasing him.

Toothless took a little while to get out his energy, but he eventually did. And that's when the high school students went back to what they were supposed to be doing. Another half hour or so and Jack was finally getting the hang of the notes, partially thanks to Hiccup's really bad history jokes that came with almost every important event listed. At least she made it easier for him to remember things while making him laugh. One thing was for sure; studying with Hiccup didn't seem all that much like work. And Jack couldn't be more thankful for that.

A little later, they heard a car door slam outside and Jack feared that it would be Scott coming home again. But he calmed down when he saw a woman enter the living room instead. She had almost the same color hair as Hiccup did, maybe a shade or two darker, and their eyes matched perfectly. Her full figure was covered by a button down, blazer, and skirt, so Jack assumed she must be a business woman of some kind.

She smiled as she entered the room "Hi, Henrika." She stopped when she saw Jack, a small smile crossing her face "Who's this?"

"Oh, uh," Hiccup moved a strand of hair behind her ear. But it fell out of place again so she settled for twisting it around her fingers "Mom, this is Jack." She looked to him "Jack, this is my mom."

The older teen lazily waved "Uh, hi! ma'am!"

Hiccup's mother laughed and shook the hand he had held up "Just call me Val; ma'am's so boring."

"Uh! got it!" Jack stammered as she released his hand.

"So, another study session I see?" Val carried on.

Her daughter nodded "That's okay! right?"

"Of course it is." Hiccup's mom seemed almost too happy about Jack being there. Well, at least she wasn't twice his size and staring him down like he was a demon or something. He could count that as a good thing, anyway "I'll be up in my room doing some research" Val stated with a sly smirk on her face "Just shout if you need anything, you two."

Hiccup watched her walk out and rose her voice to accommodate "Australia again?"

"No, South America!" Val shouted back, the sound of her shoes scaling the stairs slightly buffeting it "I haven't been through the box in years; this oughta be fun."

The younger brunette giggled, her braces glinting when her parting lips revealed them. She must have caught Jack's bewildered expression, seeing she proceeded to explain "Mom used to travel a lot before she and my dad got married."

"But why does she need to do research on that?" The older teen questioned.

"She's a travel agent." The younger responded "Whenever someone doesn't know where they wanna go; she digs through her archives and picks her favorites."

Jack nodded and the two of them went back to the books. Val came down every now and then, either to check and see if he and Hiccup wanted anything or to grab a snack to eat. Every time she did, she'd poke her head through the doorway and see what the two of them were doing and then she'd go about her business. Jack had to admit that he was already liking Hiccup's mother a lot more than her dad and brother. At least it seemed like Val trusted the pair to be alone and she'd yet to give him the feeling that he was far from welcome in this house. Or maybe she just thought her daughter needed more friends or something. From what Jack could gather, the brunette spent most of her spare time with Felix, Astrid, and Cam. He wasn't sure if she had any other friends, soâ€¦ maybe that was part of it.

Quiet ensued until the front door opened once more and Hiccup's father came stomping into the house, once again wearing nothing but a t-shirt with the sleeves cut off and athletic shorts. At first, he passed the living room right by and ascended the stairs and he heard Hiccup breathe a sigh of relief.

"I was sure he'd see you and just hover over us again." She mumbled.

The guy had a real habit of doing that every time he came home and found out that the mysterious white-haired teenager was once again sitting on his couch next to his daughter. Hiccup claimed it was because he's overprotective and Jack wouldn't put it past the man to be so. I mean, compared to him, Hiccup was a toothpick. She was small and really pretty, sure. But he'd also learned in spending all this time with her that she was very independent and strong-willed. Hiccup was more than capable of taking care of herself; it didn't look like she needed a body guard or anything like that.

Oh well, what can you do?

Hiccup's dad came down a little later and disappeared behind a door across the hall, which Hiccup explained was his man cave. And that's where he stayed until Hiccup excused herself to go grab a book she'd forgotten in her bedroom. She wasn't gone for two minutes before the giant man came wandering in, polishing an old-looking sword as he did so.

"Hey, Jack," he started "How's about another little history lesson before Henrika gets back?"

The teen didn't know how to respond at first but he eventually complied and followed the personal trainer into the room across the hall.

Hiccup wasn't kidding; it really was his man cave. One of the walls was sporting a TV that practically spanned the width of the wall, a fireplace burning beneath it. Leather couches and a matching armchair surrounded it and there was a small bar when he walked into the room with a few bar stools in front of it. The room was dark thanks to the

brown walls, but Jack could still make out the decorations scattering across the other walls.

He saw swords and daggers, among other weapons, hung up on the wall. And they looked pretty damn real to him.

"I see you've noticed my collection." Mr. Haddock chuckled "You see, I have Viking blood inside me. I take pride in that." He walked over to an empty holder and put the blade in his hands back on it "All of 'em are authentic; just like how they were when my ancestors wielded them in battle" did you know that a lot of wars were waged over a woman?"

Jack just stood there trying his best not to panic. This guy was seriously threatening him with weapons! What did he think Jack was; some kind of criminal?! Maybe it was just him, but he didn't exactly look like he was capable of robbing a bank or anything. Maybe a convenience store or something, but nothing big.

Hiccup's father continued to carry on about his "collection" for a few more minutes. After explaining the rest of his war knowledge, he proceeded to pick weapons at random and explain exactly how each one of them was used on its victim. And apparently not all of them were from the Viking era, but he bought them anyway because he liked them. One of these was a small thing that looked kind of like a pear in a glass box. He took it out and showed it to Jack before he explained what it was.

"This is The Pear of Anguish." The bearded man clarified "This one is from the Medieval Age." God, judging by the name this wouldn't be a pleasant story "You see, Jack, this one was created as a bit more of a torture device than a weapon." Said teenager just nodded slowly, eyes wide as he stared at the brass-colored object "It would be inserted into the victim's mouth and then this handle would be twisted. The pear expands until the jaw is dislocated. Sometimes the victims died choking on their own blood." He said that last part with the start of a laugh "It's one of my favorites out of my collection."

As Mr. Haddock put The Pear back, Jack stayed as still as a statue. Geez, what does this guy have against him where the poor kid has to sit through this? All he did was make friends with Hiccup; what was so wrong with that?

Almost like this whole thing was planned out, the green-eyed brunette came through the doorway and huffed "Dad, what are you doing to Jack?"

Her father pretended to have no idea what she was talking about and claimed "I figured Jack could use another lesson while you were busy, that's all."

She shook her head and smiled "I don't think Viking weaponry's going to be on a test about America in the 1800's."

Mr. Haddock put his hands on his hips and playfully rebutted "You never know."

Hiccup rolled her eyes and led Jack out of the room by the arm "I am so sorry." She whispered "I didn't think he would do that."

"Your dad wants to kill me!"

The younger teen giggled "No, he's just trying to scare you. Trust me, he's done the same thing to plenty of people."

"Oh!"

It was pretty safe to say that Hiccup didn't leave Jack alone when her dad was home anymore, which the white-haired boy was more than happy about. The last thing he'd want to do was to be left alone again and have that mountain of a man show him how The Fear of Anguish worked (yes, Jack was that paranoid; have you seen the size of this man?).

There was one more study date before Jack's test (at the library, thankfully) and Hiccup brought up that Astrid and Cam were having another bowling night and that he was invited again. He'd been welcome every weekend but he was busy for most of them, whether it be work calling him in or he was stuck at home watching Emma. He loved the girl, don't get him wrong on that, but he really didn't want to bring her knowing Hiccup would be there too. Ten-year-olds aren't exactly the best at keeping their older brother's crushes a secret.

But, thankfully, Jack had managed to keep that Saturday night open. And he felt that he did pretty well on his test. Ombric wouldn't hand out the results until after the weekend, so he didn't know for sure. That didn't mean that the boy couldn't have a good feeling about his grade. He was at least expecting to pass, anyway.

And the week just got better after that with the bowling night approaching. Jack was pretty excited to be spending more time with Hiccup and her friends. Then again, he didn't get out much as it was so he kind of needed this.

* * *

><p>Hiccup got dropped off at the Bog Bowler in a slightly uncomfortable state that night. Not because it was Scott taking her or anything, he always brought her places. What was uncomfortable was squeezing into the passenger seat with another one of her friends, Cletus. He was a quiet boy with a mop of dark brown hair that covered his eyes almost all the time. Not that it mattered too much; his face was almost always wearing a neutral expression.<p>

Cletus wasn't a particularly large boy. In fact, he and Hiccup were probably capable of sharing clothes if they really needed to. Still, that didn't make their current situation any more relaxing. Sure, she'd forced herself into the seat with Astrid all the time without a problem (Cam usually opted to riding in the bare backseat of the truck, claiming that it was "more fun that way") but it was always a bit different for her when she had to share the seat with a boy. Maybe it was the closeness and invasion of personal space. Or maybe it was the fact that sometimes she could feel things after Scott drove too fast over a pothole.

But it was a given that she was thankful when they finally pulled up to the bowling alley and Hiccup could regain her personal bubble. The two friends walked through the front doors in a comfortable silence

until Cletus spoke up.

"Umâ€¦ Hiccupâ€¦" He started in his usual, almost whisper-like tone. His voice was deep but he never used a voice louder than one would use if they were hiding from someone "thanks for inviting me."

Hiccup smiled softly "No problem. We haven't seen you in awhile, so I figured, ya know, we could all catch up."

"Ah, hello there Hiccup!" Mulch cheered when he noticed the pair "And is that Clueless I see?" Cletus nodded.

He'd been given the nickname "Clueless" affectionately by Cam when they were all still in middle school. The mop-top had always been a bit of a slow learner growing up, but once he understood something, he would remember it forever. That was something Cam didn't know when she started referring to him by the nickname after he called her "Sam" for the fifth time. He finally got her name right not long after but by then the name "Clueless" had stuck.

"Wow, it's been a long time, lad." Mulch continued "How's that fancy boarding school going for you?"

Clueless shrugged "It's okay I guess."

"Any new friends?" Mulch wondered.

"A few." The darker brunet stated.

"Good, good." The man behind the counter turned to the shoes behind him "You still the same size, kiddo?"

"Y-yeah." Clueless answered.

Mulch pulled a pair of shoes out of a cubby and scanned them over for another set "And I know you're still the same, Hiccup." He chuckled "I doubt your feet grew any since last week."

"My feet haven't grown since seventh grade." The freckled girl clarified.

"True." The clerk placed the shoes in front of the teens "Enjoy the night. The Hofferson girls should be around here somewhere."

"Alright." Hiccup took her shoes and gave Clueless the other pair "Thank, Mulch."

"Anything for you kids."

They went to the food court and sat at a random table to swap out their shoes "Oh," Hiccup exclaimed "I almost forgot." Clueless looked up from tying his shoelaces "There's someone you need to meet today."

"Who?"

"He's a new friend of mine." The brunette explained "His name's Jack."

"Jack?" Clueless repeated. Hiccup nodded "Jack" he muttered again as he tied one of his shoes and moved to the other.

Hiccup finished her shoes before sitting up and resting her arms on the tabletop "He doesn't go to our school, but he works at a library I like to go to, so I met him there."

Clueless tied his second shoe and sat back up too "Is uh Jack?" he waited for the girl to nod, telling him he got the new name correctly "is he nice?"

Hiccup nodded happily "I think you'll like him. He puts up a good fight with Cam whenever she starts something with him and he's really funny."

"Does Scott like him?"

"Please," Her head of brunette hair fell into her arms "you know how he is. Every time I make a friend that's a boy, he thinks he wants nothing but to get in my pants."

Clueless glanced at her for a moment before innocently replying "I don't think he'd fit."

Hiccup groaned and hid her face "You know what I mean." She peeked through her arms to see the quiet boy smirking at her and lightly chuckling "Cute. Very, very cute." She snidely commented. Clueless shrugged and just continued to smile.

"Hey!" Astrid called, causing the two to turn her way as she and her twin approached.

"It's about time you guys showed." Hiccup remarked "I was starting to think it'd be just us for a bit there."

Astrid sat down and greeted Clueless while Cam just stared at him for a minute "Why did no one tell me Clueless was coming?"

"Because I didn't know he'd be here this weekend either." Hiccup claimed.

The only boy in the group shifted awkwardly in his seat "Sorry. Should I have texted you first?"

"Hell yeah, you should have!" Cam answered "If I knew you were coming, I would have thought up some decent puns. You guys know I'm bad at improv!"

Clueless cracked another smile and awkwardly started moving his hands around "I'll remember next time. Promise."

Cam smirked as she sat beside her sister and adjusted her jacket "You'd better prepare yourself then. Because you'll be Clueless about my jokes next time." She looked around with a forced smile "Nothing."

"You're the one that said you were bad at improv." Astrid reminded.

A few minutes after that, Felix showed up and the quintet started to catch up with each other and ask Clueless to tell them about what life at boarding school is like. Most of his answers were only a sentence or two long, like when he talked the rest of the time. But on a few subjects, like how bossy his PE teacher is and how a lot of the girls think he's "mysterious" because he gets honors yet is so bad at learning new names, faces, and directions outside of the classroom. Cam tried to make another bad "Clueless" joke and, once again, didn't get even a chuckle. Just a smile from the boy who hid his eyes behind his hair.

It had been a long time since all five of them had gotten together and talked about just everyday stuff. With everyone getting into their own clubs and sports and Clueless going to school so far away, they were almost never all together in the same place. Jack might not have been there yet, but the evening was already promising to be a pretty good one.

* * *

><p>The five teens had already started eating their meal of hotdogs and fries when the last member of their group had showed up. Jack came over to the table and greeted everyone. Then, he noticed Clueless and yet another awkward introductory session had to ensue. But Clueless got Jack's name right, so it was less awkward that it could have been. Seemed he'd gotten better with names since he'd gone away for school.<p>

Jack took the only open seat left at the table, between Felix and Hiccup, and snagged a hotdog from the tray that Bertha had brought out for them a little while earlier. And he apparently decided that stealing fries from Hiccup's plate was a better idea than taking his own handful from the giant basket of them that sat in the middle of the table.

Hiccup called him out on it "You could take your own, you know." She hated when people took her food without asking her.

"I couldâ€|" Jack mused as he took yet another fry from her plate "but this is more fun." He smirked as he waved it in front of her face.

Jack's look of pride quickly turned into one of confusion and shock when Hiccup smirked back and bit the fry in his hand and took it into her mouth. When she pulled away, all that was left of it was the tiny stub between the older teen's fingers. The freckled girl swallowed the fry and gave a triumphant smile to her challenger.

Jack looked at her blankly; his mouth agape and eyebrows raised "â€|What was that?!"

"Revenge." She smirked, her serious tone overpowering the playful expression on her face "Don't take my fries without asking."

Jack nodded "Sorryâ€|"

They both turned back to their own meals and Hiccup tried to listen in on Astrid and Felix's conversation about school. And that worked for a little while. That is, until Clueless' little voice came in and asked "Are you guysâ€| datingâ€|?"

All eyes turned to Clueless in an instant. And then, right after that, to Hiccup and Jack. Hiccup's eyes got about as wide as they could without them popping out of her skull and she felt heat rush up her neck and into her cheeks. She tried to tilt her head so that her hair would cover most of her face, but that didn't exactly work as well as she hoped it would. With Astrid's "oohh's" and Felix claiming that he was interested in the answer too, she just decided it was hopeless and moves her long locks out of her face.

Hiccup finally looked at Jack and saw that he looked just as flustered as she did. His pale skin had turned a fierce red all the way from his neckline to his ears and he was obviously trying to look anywhere but at the brunette beside him. He coughed and did his best to say "uhh" but even that didn't come out quite right.

Hiccup cleared her throat and looked at her friend, who also had a bit of blush on his cheeks "Sorryâ€|" He muttered "Should I not have askedâ€|?"

"No, no, it's okay." Hiccup tried to soothe with a shaky voice "W-we're not dating, no, but uhâ€| you didn't know that, I mean you just met the guy what an hour ago?" She tried to laugh it off but failed miserably at that.

"I was just curiousâ€|" Clueless defended with a hush.

"I know, I know." Hiccup replied "It's-"

"It's okay." Jack interjected "No worries, Clueless." His voice was still sort of failing him, but he got his point across well enough.

* * *

><p>After that uhâ€| surprising event that Clueless brought up, Jack did his best to calm his heartbeat and get the heat from his face andâ€| other places. It seemed everyone tried to get past that topic by talking about almost any general topic they could come up with. But, for the most part, Jack remained silent and so did Hiccup, which interested him a bit. Did it really make Hiccup as uncomfortable as him to be asked if they wereâ€| a thing?<p>

Jack liked her, he knew that by now. But still, being mistaken for a couple when they're not is justâ€| weird. It's other people seeing their behaviors towards one another and deciding that those signs meant that the people in question were dating. Or, if they weren't, that they clearly should. The assumption was innocent, Jack knew that very well. Clueless seemed to be the kind of person who really didn't like to overstep boundaries or upset people. So he did let it go butâ€| it still stirred up something inside of him in a way that he didn't like. He couldn't explain it better than that, though. All he knew was, whatever it was, he didn't like it.

Soon enough, everyone had finished eating and their bowling tournament was getting underway. Nothing was t_o_o_ weird about that, except for the Hofferson sisters whispering to each other. It looked like it was nothing until Felix started scribbling in names on the score card.

"Hold it!" Cam ordered "Why don't we make the game a little more interesting." She said with a smile that honestly scared Jack a little bit.

"Interesting how?" Hiccup questioned.

Clueless followed up with "Yeah, how?"

"I'm glad you asked, my friends." Cam crossed her arms and popped out one of her hips "How about we split into teams, since we're an even number for once?"

"I don't see why not." Felix put down the pencil and turned his gaze back up to the rest of the group and everyone else tentatively nodded "How are we gonna choose teams?"

"We figured that out." Astrid stated, pulling out her cell phone "There's an app on my phone where you put names or numbers into it and it can group them up or be a spinner for a board game and stuff like that." She tapped it a few times "There we go. Jack, you're with Hiccup, Cam's with Clueless, and I'm with Felix.

Jack found Hiccup's gaze and smiled at her. She smiled back and her shoulders rose a bit, like she was nervous about being paired up with the older boy.

"Right!" Cam grabbed Clueless' arms and pushed Astrid closer to Felix "Let's start the game!"

And so, the game started with Jack and Hiccup's team going up first. The way they decided the game would go was the person bowling would alternate with each round. So Jack went the first round and Hiccup went in the next one, and so on. It wasn't a bad system, he had to admit. After all, he had more time to swipe a few snacks from the dispensers near the front doors this way and he still got to taunt Cam and she him. So, if anything, the game was more fun this way.

Towards the end of the game, it was Hiccup's turn once again and Jack took this round to just watch her. Mostly because he was trying to figure out her technique and exactly how it actually worked because wow, they bowled two completely different ways. Jack always gripped the ball with only one hand and all but ran down the lane until he got close to the line and let it fly down to the pins. Meanwhile, Hiccup's approach was gentler, overall. She held it with two hands until she was ready to let it go, lining it up from its place in her hands before she even started walking down the lane with it. Both methods worked, sure. But wow, Jack couldn't handle taking so much thought into sending the ball down that corridor of polished wood. He didn't really think when he bowled, or when he played any sport or game. He just did it and followed the rules. Nothing more or less.

When Hiccup released her ball this time around, she landed a strike and pulled their team ahead of Astrid and Felix by five points. She glanced over her shoulder and smiled at Jack while she waited for her ball to come back. And that look made Jack melt a little inside. Her braces glinted slightly and her hair was waving as it settled behind her back. Jack found himself smiling back at her, even as her eyes left his and she went on to take her second turn. One more strike and

the others would have a little problem catching up with them.

But that wasn't the only thing on his mind. Maybe Eli was right about going after Hiccup before someone else came into the picture. Clueless joining their group for the night only encouraged Jack more. Hiccup had a lot more male friends than he originally thought and she was clearly very open to making new friends, very contrary to Jack's original interpretation of her social life. But maybe he was just telling himself that she didn't like having a lot of friends to make himself feel better.

He sighed. _God I'm pathetic._

Jack was pulled out of his daze by an unfamiliar voice "Pretty girl, hm?"

The white-haired teen quickly turned and saw a rather tall man with decently sized muscles standing behind him. He had blond hair and a beard to match underneath a worn baseball cap. Though, it looked like some of it was missing for some reason. And a right hand that looked very plastic was holding onto a mop and, in his left hand, a metal bucket filled with soapy water.

"Uhâ€¦ sureâ€¦?" Jack honestly didn't know what this guy was going for with the comment but it sure did catch his attention.

"Don't lie to me, lad." The man went on, taking a seat beside Jack and putting his supplies beside him. Only then did the teen realize just how tall this guy was. He was a freaking giant! "I saw the way you were lookin' at her."

Jack blinked. Was it really that obvious to _everyone_ that he may or may not have a _little_ thing for Hiccup?

"She's somethin', she is." The man went on "Pretty, smart, great bowling armâ€¦ yet singleâ€¦" Jack's eyebrows rose at that statement, questioning the credibility of this guy's words "somethin' worth chasin'â€¦ like the sun." He looked up at one of the lights on the ceiling after that and smiled. Then, he looked out a nearby window "Too bad it's cloudy today. But it'll come out soon enough."

Then, he got up, took his things, and disappeared behind the door to the supply closet. Jack watched the door for a few minutes, thinking he'd emerge again, but he never really got a chance to see because the next thing he heard was Cam yelling that it was his turn to bowl. Wow, when did the rest of the round even take place? Was he really _that_ into his thoughts and talking to a janitor? Apparently, yes.

Jack stood and took the ball he'd been using all game and took his turn, smiling at his partner before he did so.

_Yes. _ Jack told himself _This will happen._

* * *

><p>Edit: Okay, so I forgot to say when I posted this chapter that Clueless is a character from the HTTYD books. He's really a background character but I really liked him so... I brought him into this fic.

12. Rodents and Romance Novels

****I have no words other than thank goodness I finally got this chapter cranked out because of stupid writer's block and stuff's finally happening.****

****Enjoy the chapter. :)****

*** * ***

><p>The following Monday, Jack was more than grateful that his morning had an easy start. Gym was pretty welcome to waking him up first period, as always. Now that it was getting colder out, he was really enjoying having to run the track or whatever with North and Eli in the chill, though Eli absolutely hated it. Wimp.<p>

Jack loved the cold and he loved winter; it was his favorite season of the year. The only real shame in it was when PE moved inside as the snow piled up and the temperature dropped below the freezing mark. Thankfully, it wasn't there quite yet but it was definitely coming. It was strange, being a little warmer than normal this year. Not that he was complaining or anything; he just missed the frigid weather way too much.

On top of Gym, History was mostly just Ombric passing back their tests and going over them. Apparently, the old man with a long, curly beard gave them the test for both a grade and as a way to study for their upcoming midterms. He put a lot of things that he claimed to be on the exam on it and wanted to ensure everyone corrected whatever they got wrong for this purpose. Jack got an 80 on the test, which he was more than happy with. It was much better than what he thought it would be without Hiccup's help. He'd have to thank her later for thatâ€¦|

As the class went over the questions, Jack more or less paid attention, scribbling down brief answers to what he didn't answer right. But he mostly just fiddled with his pen and his mind wandered back to the green-eyed girl with matching braces. He was interested in his train of thought, but it was also starting to get pretty annoying. It seemed all that he could think about was Hiccup lately.

The whole weekend after bowling with Hiccup and her friends again, Jack's mind never seemed to stop working. His thoughts kept him from focusing on anything else, so he wished he could just daydream about something else for a few minutes. He'd lie awake into the wee hours of the morning just pondering and thinking of all of the possible outcomes of his new-found desires. His ever-growing interest in her was starting to haunt him.

But what would happen if he surprised those lush meadows and made them bigger than he'd ever seen them before? What would it feel like to take that freckled hand into his own and hold it tightly? What would Hiccup's lips feel like against his own, and what would it be like to just hold onto her waist and feel her body pressed against his in a long embrace?

These thoughts have been there for awhile, of course, but it was only

then that the teen had actually started to consider acting upon them. Until this point, it was just some silly crush. Something he'd get over in a matter of time and the two of them would just settle into being friends and nothing more. That's what he expected, anyway.

Because that's all he'd ever heard about teenage romance. That it never lasts. That most of the time the feelings that his classmates mistake for love are nothing more than periods of infatuation; something that feels good while it lasts and is later tossed away for another. He'd seen his classmates travel from person to person, dating someone new every month or so, or even couples that lasted for longer durations breaking off and never seeing each other again. Jack didn't want that. It's one of the reasons he never sought after a relationship before now.

But Hiccupâ€¦ Hiccup made him think that maybe, just maybe, opening himself up and acting upon his adjusting hormones wouldn't be so bad. He thought that it was possible to have a bond that would mean something with her. That it wouldn't be just a simple fling to calm the chemicals coursing through his blood.

Maybe it was teaming up with her on Friday night. Maybe it was seeing her friend Clueless and learning that Felix wasn't the only male friend that the brunette had, besides himself. Or maybe it was just his concealed emotions overflowing inside of him and wanting nothing more than to just burst out. Whatever the reason, Jack knew that North and Eli were right. Hiccup wasn't a mind reader. And she sure as hell wasn't just going to fall into his lap. But, if he didn't act soon, she could very well get swept into someone else's.

So it was at the tone of the bell allowing classes to transition that he decided that he was going to ask Hiccup out.

There was only one problem with this sudden confidence boost. He'd received a text message from Hiccup on Saturday night, telling him that she wouldn't be able to come to the library at all for the next week or so. Apparently, her brother tried to fix a ticking sound coming from the motor in his truck and managed to break the vehicle even more than it already was. So, the Haddock siblings were condemned to taking the school bus until they could get it back from the repair shop.

Yep, smooth timing there, Jack. He sighed as he made his way to his locker_ All of this sudden motivation and you can't even use it._

At least she'd be back to her normal schedule soon. Or, at least, he hoped she would. One thing was for sure, work would be a lot more mundane now that he didn't have the freckled girl sitting at her table. Now what was he supposed to do when shifts were dead? Hell, it would only be any bit entertaining if he had another shift with Sandy, which he was pretty sure he didn't have.

The white-haired teen switched out his books and spent a little extra time just staring into his locker. This week was going to be hell, he could just feel it.

"Hey, Overland!" A silky voice beckoned. Jack looked over his shoulder and saw a familiar tall, slender figure with jet black hair and pale skin advancing towards him "I've been looking everywhere for

you!"

A semi-forced smile crept onto Jack's face "Hey, Pitch." He closed his locker and faced the other teen "What's up?"

Pitch lazily waved a hand and glanced around "Oh, nothing out of the ordinary, same old same old." Bright hazel eyes flicked his way "I was actually going to rig a prank during fifth period. That_ is _when you've got your study hall, right?"

"Yeah, it is." The shorter male confirmed "But why do you need my help?"

"Oh, I thought you'd never ask!" The taller exclaimed jovially "I need you because, well, you always know how to make a mess, don't you?"

Jack shrugged. It wasn't true, but it wasn't exactly false either. He had a bit of a history of getting into Pitch's pranks whenever the lanky teen invited him to do so. Sure, the guy was a bit of a dick and he had a pretty lengthy track record (compared to Jack's, anyway), but Jack loved to just enjoy a good laugh every once in awhile and Pitch always provided it. Besides, maybe if he made the guy think they were friends, maybe Jack would be spared during his apparently "unbeatable" senior prank that he had planned for next year. He didn't know much other than it involvedâ€| root beer, he thought it was? Or was it bubble wrap?

The white-haired male pondered the rest of the day, deemed it too bland without a good prank, before he replied "Sure, I'll join in."

"Excellent!" Pitch cheered "Meet me by the locker rooms as soon as you can get out of the lecture room." He started to walk away, but turned around suddenly "Oh, and make sure no one follows you, hmm? The whole gag'll be ruined if anyone sees us." After that, he sauntered down the hallway, his black trench coat moving behind him like a robe.

Jack had to admit, Pitch wasn't the best person to hang around with, but man was he smooth.

* * *

><p>It wasn't all that hard for Jack to sneak out of the lecture hall during his free period, mostly because the proctor hates the "you have to ask to go to the bathroom" rule because, come on, they were all juniors and seniors in high school. The guy believed that if these kids had to ask before doing something like that, how were they expected to have their futures planned out? This philosophy allowed the teen to just slink out the door without as much as a second glance.<p>

After that, the walk downstairs to the locker rooms went without incident and he found Pitch's figure casually lounging outside the girls' locker room. He looked pretty relaxed leaning against the wall, but something in his face made Jack think that he had just had some fun messing with whatever group of girls happened to have PE this period.

"That was faster than I thought." The taller teen commented.

"It's kinda easy to sneak out when you have a proctor that just lets you leave whenever." Jack replied "So, what's this prank idea of yours anyway?"

"Right." Pitch pushed himself off of the wall "Follow me." He led Jack down the hallway and stopped in front of the door to one of the science labs. He glanced around again before he whispered "I hope you're not afraid of mice."

Jack stared up at him, eyebrows knitting together "What?"

Pitch turned the doorknob and wasn't surprised to find it locked. He took a bobby pin out of his hair and started to wriggle it around inside the lock. Seconds later, the door was open and the two boys slipped inside.

"There." The black-haired boy pointed out "That's our latest prank, Jackie." Jack rolled his eyes at the nickname before he locked them onto a glass tank filled with white lab mice "The psychology students are planning to use them for an experiment. Too bad they'll have to catch them all again first."

"Setting mice loose in the school?" Jack summarized before smirking "Dude, they might even let us go early for this if we're lucky."

"I doubt that." Pitch responded "But there's no doubt it's possible. Probably only if enough girls scream bloody murder, though." He strode over to the tank "Help me with this thing."

They each gripped one side of the top of the tank and set it down behind the glass barrier. Jack glanced at the mice inside "So you wanna just dump 'em or what?"

"It won't be much fun if they're all trapped in the basement." Pitch explained "So we'll both grab some and let them loose on the upper floors. Or, at least, the main floor." He chuckled.

Jack nodded "Got it." He reached inside the tank and scooped up a handful of the mice. Pitch did the same and they split up, Jack taking the main floor and Pitch remaining in the basement.

The white-haired boy wandered a distance away from the stairs before he knelt down and let a few of his mice go. They scampered off and Jack moved again. He let a few loose every five or so steps, to make sure they all didn't just run off in a giant group. When he was done, he went back into the basement for more and released that group on the first floor as well.

He was actually surprised that this was going off without a hitch at all. Usually, they'd have to cleverly excuse what they were doing to some kid who didn't want to be in class or forgot a book or something. It was always a pretty bad cover, but it was amazing what some kids would buy. Last year, some girl caught them rigging buckets of glue and sparkles above the boys' locker room door and told her that this was all part of a "prom-posal" that they were helping a friend with. Neither were sure if she saw the glue bucket or not, but she bought it nonetheless and skipped off. They just went back to work after that, snickering about how the football team will look

once they get their little "makeover" before practice.

Everything was going just as well as that time. No fuss, no technical difficulties, and no one got bustedâ€| yet. That, however, was quickly trumped when Jack was descending the stairs again and he heard an adult male's voice shout "Hey, Overland!"

* * *

><p>So, it turned out the prank was more than safe. Contrary to what Jack believed, the teacher who flagged him down only yelled at him to get back to whatever class he was supposed to be in. Guess he saw a flash of the white hair after another trip up and down the stairs or something. Oh well, at least the plan wasn't discovered at that moment in time.<p>

No, that satisfaction came later in the day. It was the start of sixth period and everyone was just getting settled into their next class. That is, until some screaming sounded from downstairs and the principal made an announcement that the lab mice had somehow gotten into the kitchen. Jack heard later on that some wound up in other classrooms, but it seemed like a lot of them were just hiding from all of the noise that made up the high school. He couldn't say he blamed them, though.

That kept Jack grinning and laughing to himself for the rest of his classes and even on the way to work. But the moment he saw the big, old building, he just wanted to turn around and take a detention instead.

Just like he predicted, the shift was pretty much dead. Just a handful of people had come in so far and they were all either borrowing a book or returning one. Eventually, Harry came out of his office and ordered him to put all of the returned books back where they belonged. And then, because he apparently saw how bored Jack was, he told the teen to organize the romance section.

He internally groaned because God, of all the sections in this whole library, the romance section was the most unnecessary and boring of them all. Hell, even the history section was better! At least in there you could read about interesting things like the Holocaust or Genocide.

â€| Wait, were those two the same thingâ€|? They were, weren't they? Ugh, maybe he should stop while he was ahead and just do the damned work before he said something embarrassingly stupid out loud.

So, he did. And Jack had to admit that organizing this section was more fun than he'd ever anticipated it to be! Just reading the titles and looking at the covers made him want to bust a gut laughing. If only he didn't have to be so quiet at workâ€| that was the only way this could have been made any more perfect. Come on, titles like "The Fallen Petals" and so many cover image of people almost-kissing had to be funny to someone besides him.

Though, that little flicker of interest grew when Jack dropped one of the books in a stack he was holding and it fell open on a random page. He put down the rest of his pile and plucked the book off of the ground. His eyes began to scan over the page, out of curiosity. There had to be some reason girls liked reading these so much, right?

This novel seemed to be about the daughter of a priest and Jack guessed the problem was her father didn't approve of whoever she'd been seeing. The only thing that really stood out to him was how _flowery_ the writing was; comparing her crush's eyes to "sparkling pools of blue" and his hair to "flowing strands of chocolate." Seriously, what moron described features like this?!

â€| Wait a minuteâ€| he did. Jack hung his head in shame at that realization. _Crap_. He scolded himself _I've been doing that all along, haven't I?_ Okay, maybe these books were _sort of_ realistic.

Jack's thoughts were cut off by the sound of the front door opening and inching shut. He looked in the direction of the front desk and saw a familiar head of blond hair waddle in on short legs. "Hey, Felix." Jack greeted as his friend turned to face him "What are you doing here? I thought you only came here with Hiccup."

"Yeah," The blond casually approached him "but I got to really like the place so I figured I'd check out a book or two, maybe hang out for awhile."

"Whatever you want." The older boy confirmed "I needed someone to entertain me today, since, well, you can see how dead it is in here."

Felix lazily waved the comment off "Come on, it can't be that boring can it?"

"Are you crazy?" Jack lowly hissed "Nothing ever happens and it's _so_ freaking quiet!"

"That's one reason why I like it here." The younger teen admitted "It's a nice escape when stuff starts getting crazy, you know?"

"I guess you're right." Jack nodded "But I can't take this much quiet; do you have any idea how much noise I'm used to at home?"

Felix chuckled "I clearly don't." He glanced around and stopped on the book in Jack's hands "Any reason you're reading the romance section?"

"I was just organizing the shelves andâ€|" Jack stopped as the other boy's face gave off disbelief "And this one fell open so I picked it up andâ€| I don't knowâ€|"

The blond smirked and patted him on the back "Jack, trust me, if you knew some of the books I love to read, you'd think I'm weird too."

"No, it's not that! Iâ€|" The white-haired boy sighed before continuing. Might as well tell him the truth "Well, I was thinking about asking Hiccup out and-"

"Wait, _really?!_" _Felix exclaimed, quick to lower his voice after the outburst "You're serious?"

"Yeah, I meanâ€|" Jack nervously ruffled his hair, darting his eyes away from the other teen "she's really funâ€| and pretty and I-I

really like her so I thought uhâ€¦ why not try, right?"

A plump hand clapped onto his shoulder "Yeah, go for it." Upon seeing the older boy's smile grow, Felix leaned a little closer and cupped his free hand near Jack's ear "I'm not supposed to tell you this, but Hiccup's got a little thing for you too."

Blue eyes widened and pale skin turned a flushed pink "Uhâ€¦ Y-you're sure?"

"Yeah, she told me awhile ago." Felix affirmed.

"I-I didn't know sheâ€¦" Jack cleared his throat "felt that way, how'd you know?"

"Oh trust me," Felix bragged "Hiccup's one of my best friends; she winds up telling me everything eventually."

"Hold on, did you say 'friends?'"The older blinked as the younger shrugged "Man, this whole time I thought you and her were a thing."

"Uhâ€¦" The younger stammered "Well, no. We'reâ€¦ we're just friends." He backed away and shifted his weight from one foot to the other "Is that why you kept acting weird around me?"

"Yeahâ€¦" Jack sighed and hung his head "Sorry, I was uhâ€¦ trying to figure out if you were together or not before Iâ€¦"He peeked at Felix through his bangs.

"Hmâ€¦" The blond tapped his fingers against his thigh in pondering, dark green eyes flicking back and forth like a clock's tick "That makes sense now, actually."

"â€¦ It was that obviousâ€¦?" Jack gave a guilty smile.

"Well, yeah." Felix drawled "You were only glaring at me, like, every time I got close to her."

The white-haired boy lightly chuckled "Sorry, man. Guess I got a little jealous."

The younger teen smiled warmly "Water under the bridge."

Jack peeked over Felix's shoulder and saw Harry's skinny frame glaring at the two of them from the front desk "So, uh, I gotta finish up here. You go look around and, if you find anything you like, come to me and I'll ring you up, kay?"

"Will do." Felix walked past Jack and murmured to him "Seriously though, good luck with Hiccup." Then, he vanished as he turned a corner to go to another section. And Jack went back to his work with a small smile on his face.

13. Closing Down and Choking Up

**Hello, everyone! So, I think you all know what's going to happen in this chapter and that's why I'm not going to get in your way this time around and just let you enjoy the chapter. **

**Thank you for the follows, favorites, and reviews~! I love you all.
:)**

* * *

><p>The last week and a half wasâ€| boring, to say the least. Ever since Scott broke his truck (a feat that Hiccup really did not want to know how he accomplished), Hiccup hadn't been able to go to the library to see Jack or hang out with her other friends, unless someone else gave her a ride to and from. With both of her own parents having really wonky working hours, getting a ride somewhere wasn't the easiest thing in the world. So, she was left to waking up an hour earlier than normal so that she could get herself ready in time to catch the busâ€| and rushing to her locker at the end of the day in order to take it home. Gods, she couldn't wait until Scott got the truck back.<p>

The only day out of the ten that the truck was out of commission that Hiccup managed to get out of the house was when Cam had fencing practice after school and Astrid invited her to stay after and watch. The blonde claimed that her mother wouldn't mind dropping the brunette off, so she didn't refuse.

But, for the most part, watching Cam and a bunch of boys (yes, she was the only girl on the whole team) run through practice drills and try to stab each other in the chest got to be pretty boring. Mostly because Cam was not only on the team but was the captain. So practice was more like "Dictator Hofferson's Squad of Suckers," as Cam liked to call it. And, ever the braggart she was, the messy blonde took advantage of the fact that a girl led the team. It was her main angle when telling the guys that they sucked that round or how their attacks were too weak.

Their coach never came into the gym until after the warm-ups were over, probably because he liked to let Cam rough up the rest of the team a bit. The blondes told Hiccup that the coach noticed that the guys behave better if Cam wears them out a bit during warm-ups, so they were less of a headache for him. Coach Hugh Hotshot was his name andâ€| let's just say he loved to make his presence known. He had blond hair that kind of reminded Hiccup of Thor and matching stubble on his face, which was starting to darken with forming gray hairs. He was a well built man and always one to tell a crazy story if he could find the time, mostly about the adventures he took when he was in his twenties.

But Hiccup also knew him on a more personal level. And that's because the high school coach was an old flame of her mother's. Val has told her stories about her youth and how she was always an adventurous spirit "before you kids came along." And many of her photo albums were filled to the last page with images to document her travels. And a lot of them were taken with none other than Hugh Hotshot by her side. Apparently, before they got separated on one trip through some mountain range in search of some treasure of local legend, he even asked Val to marry him. Hiccup was never told exactly what happened to them, but apparently some freak storm hit and they got separated in the chaos. Her mother looked for her partner for a week before coming back home and didn't find a trace of him. She was convinced after that point that the man was dead.

Val didn't go on another trip for a long time after that. It was almost like a reality check for her; that she still had more domestic things that she wanted to do before she died. She wanted to have a family of her own someday and pass on the tales of her adventures to them. She wanted something more than pictures to be remembered by and, really, how else can someone be remembered? Val knew she would always want to explore the world, but she could suppress that desire until she could fill more albums and, hopefully, take her children on some incredible trips with her someday. And that's what she did. She settled into a much more mundane lifestyle, went to college, got a job at the travel agency that she practically ran now. And then she met Stefan Haddock and, well, anyone can guess what happened from there.

The only mystery remaining was exactly what happened to Mr. Hotshot over those next few years. And that was solved when he escaped a maze of caverns he had been trapped inside and made his way back to the States. He tracked Val down so that they could pick up where they left off but, when he got to the front door, he learned all too quickly that he was too late for that. His old love answered the door that day when she was very clearly pregnant with Scott. The tiny ruby encased in a gold ring that he gave her was replaced with a silver wedding band decorated with a bright, shiny diamond.

But that didn't exactly mean they went their separate ways. Even as time went on, she kept the ring Hugh gave her. To this day, she had it on a chain around her neck, a symbol of her past life and the set of events that led her to the life that she was leading now. Even after all that had happened, Hugh and Val did pick up where they left off; they just left certain details in the past and stayed friends. And Hiccup thought that was great. It said something about the man, really. He only wanted to keep Val in his life; it didn't matter what role she played in it as long as she was. Hugh was a good guy and it seemed like he even had his eye on Hiccup and Scott at school. But it was still awkward whenever he and her father were in the same room. Eh, life's not perfect.

Cam's practice was let out and the trio of girls hung out on the bleachers until Bertha came to pick them up. After that, Hiccup was dropped off at her house and the rest of her incredibly long week ensued. At least she finally got out of that dungeon in The Legend of Zelda. That only took three months total to accomplish.

Needless to say she was excited that Scott finally got his truck back from the repair shop. Not really because she hated being stuck in the house with him or anything, but so she could go to the library again. Her bother seemed to be just as happy to get his "baby" back too. He'd been missing going wherever-it-is he liked to go every few days with Derek, but he seemed to busy himself in the garage. Though, it was without his loud music this time. And she didn't hear any tools banging because there was nothing to mess around with. But Hiccup could have sworn that she walked past the door one time and heard classical music? She decided she'd rather not question him anymore; he's done weirder stuff than start listening to a new genre of music.

Hiccup's excitement came more from the fact that she wouldn't be so isolated anymore. Sure, she saw all of her other friends in school every day, but she'd gone about ten days without seeing Jack and, well, it kind of hurt. They texted each other over that time, but

Jack's silly emoticons were nothing compared to seeing his expressions and hearing him laugh at her smart remarks. Hiccup missed Jack's voice and his contagious smiles and his go-with-the-flow personality. The older teen was fun to be around and, she wasn't gonna lie to herself, the boy was attractive. _Really attractive.

Hiccup guessed that she justâ€| missed him in general. It was almost like the emptiness that she felt in the past week came from not seeing Jack. Gods, crushes were so weird! Why couldn't it just go away? This was really starting to annoy her; it was like seeing Jack or not impacted the rest of her day. Nothing else had ever done this to her; not hearing bad news first thing in the morning, not waiting for a vacation or expecting a snow dayâ€| nothing. No matter how hard Hiccup tried to keep the white-haired teen off of her mindâ€| she just couldn't. Jack was stuck in her mind and he refused to leave.

If this didn't end soonâ€| maybe she'd just have to work up the courage to say something to him. She just hoped, if she didn't, it would turn out better than the last time she tried her hand at dating.

* * *

><p>Jack came into work that day with a bit of relief over him. But also some anxiety. He got out early that night because Harry had been putting Sandy on night shift duty lately. His pay was lower, of course, but the college boy's personal matters had been interfering with his own work hours. He needed them more than Jack anyway. Besides, he'd get them backâ€| eventually.<p>

The anxious feeling in his gut was coming from seeing Hiccup that day. He knew she was finally able to come back to the library and, in a way, he didn't want her to yet. He wasn't sure if he was ready yet; if he was prepared to tell her how he felt and not look like a complete idiot. The teen talked to Anna about it a few times over the past week, asking her questions that probably sounded really stupid to the aspiring dentist, seeing as she had more relationship experience than he did. She kept telling him to just be honest with her; say what was in his heartâ€| but not enough to scare her off either. That led to a joke about how confessing undying love for someone you aren't dating would raise a few red flags in the other person's mind. Ugh, at least his sister had a sense of humor. That was always good when he was having a crisis to talk to her about, that was for sure.

At least he had a bit of time before Hiccup did walk through the front door of the library and take a seat at her normal table. Fortunately, she was alone. That would make this easier, for sure. It would be a lot less weird to pull her to the side if she was by herself anyway, right? Right. Once Hiccup's focus was on her assignments, Jack did his best to keep his mind on work. But the details behind asking her out were still buzzing around in his head.

He was afraid of a lot of ridiculous things as this went on. That she'd brush him off, she wouldn't let him finish before shutting him down, that she'd actually laugh at him. Jack silenced them as well as he could. It was just him over-thinking thingsâ€| that was all. The

worst she would ever do is say no. Hiccup wasn't like that. She was kind and sensitive to other people's emotions. She'd never try to hurt someone who didn't deserve it. Hiccup would hear him out. She'd listen until he was finished. She wouldn't laugh.

"Hey~!" Jack came out of his daze of blankly checking in books and saw Anna coming towards him with a skip in her step and a knowing smile on her face.

"Hey~!" He greeted "what are you doing here; I thought you had classes tonight?"

His sister tucked a rainbow lock of hair behind her ear "I do, but I wanted to stop by here first and see you."

Jack leaned on the counter and smirked "What do you want, sis?"

The college student sighed before clutching the books in her arms close to her chest, perfect teeth glimmering "Did you ask her yet?"

Her brother chuckled and moved his bangs out of his eyes "Not yet." He glanced Hiccup's way and saw her focusing on the book in front of her "I'm working on it."

Anna followed Jack's eyes until she spotted the brunette as well "Is that her?" she whispered. Jack nodded and it looked like she was about to scream in happiness, but then remembered where she was and closed her mouth "Oh my gosh, she's adorable!" She was trying to be as quiet as possible but was clearly struggling with that "Why didn't you tell me she was that cute; I don't even know her yet and I love her."

Jack felt heat creep up his neck and dust onto his cheeks. He looked down at the countertop and smiled "I can't tell you everything; where's the fun if you know everything?"

"I guess you're right." She glanced back at Hiccup before smiling at her brother again "I'd better get going before I'm late. Good luck."

"Thanks." The younger teen watched her exit before returning to his stack of books and continuing to check them back in.

He carried on until the stack was all checked in and on the cart. Then, he started pushing it through the aisles of bookshelves and began putting them all back in their rightful places. And he made sure he did; he REALLY didn't want Harry to come out and tell him to re-organize a section because he put them in the wrong places.

He was in the science fiction section when he felt a vibration in his pocket. Someone was texting him. Ugh, he wasn't supposed to be texting at work but~! eh, what the hell? The shelves would cover him for a few minutes while he took a peek at the message, anyway.

He pulled his phone out of his pocket and entered his pass code, unlocking the device. He pulled up the most recent text he received _Hey Jack. _It was a text from Sandy _Can't take the night shift tonight. I gotta take care of my brother. Do you mind covering for me?_

He put the book he had in his free hand back on the cart and replied
Is it his nightmares again?

Before he could even put his phone down to keep doing his job, it vibrated again. Geez, Sandy was a fast texter _Yeah. He says I'm the only thing that keeps them away, so I'm gonna hang with him for the night if I can._

Jack weighed his options and decided that there were no other ones, really. _Uhâ€| sure. Tell Lucien I said hi. :)_

Sandy's little brother had been suffering from nightmares and night terrors since he was six years old or so. Sandy was convinced that they had something to do with the fact that Lucien was adopted by his parents when the poor kid was a toddler. The blond never told Jack where he came from, probably because he didn't know himself, but it was a hunch that he'd had for some time now. They weren't so bad at first, but they've been getting more and more frequent as he got older. It was really starting to scare everyone who knew Lucien.

It was weird though, that Sandy had some kind of soothing effect on the preteen. Sandy was a pretty chill guy and all, but he didn't get how he could keep the kid from having bad dreams all the time. Apparently, the stout man didn't understand it himself. But he and Lucien have had a pretty strong bond since they became comfortable with one another; awhile after the younger was adopted. If it helped him, that was all that Sandy cared about.

Sandy replied _I will. And thanks, Jack. I owe you one._

_No prob. :P _

Jack put his phone away and went back to work, putting the rest of the books back where they belonged. As he was pushing the cart back behind the desk, he glanced up at the clock and his eyes widened. Crap; it was already 7:30! Hiccup could be going at any minute now.

_Okay, okay, cool it Jack _He told himself _If you missed her, you can just do it Monday or somethingâ€| no big deal_.

He parked the cart and looked around the library. Hiccup was still there, reading _How to Break a Dragon's Heart_, the eighth book in the series that started everything. It was kind of amazing to Jack that Hiccup could crank through eight books in only a couple of months. But, granted, they were children's books so they were easy to read and the brunette was definitely more of a bookworm than he was. Maybe he should introduce her to Querty sometimeâ€| they might get along well.

_No, no, focus! _Jack reminded himself _Just go over there and ask her. Get it over with._

The white-haired teen scanned the room around him and took notice that the door to Harry's office was closed, like it usually was. A bit of light was filtering through the tiny window on it so he knew that the old man was, in fact, in there. There was a decent sized group of people in the library, but it was no one that he saw outside of the place. Even if he did make himself look like an idiot, at

least it would only be in front of Hiccup and a bunch of strangers.

Jack meandered from the desk to Hiccup's table. He rested his hands on the tabletop and put his weight on them before he spoke "Hey, Hiccup." He started "So, uh, I saw the time and I wanted to ask you something before you left." Wow, way to be subtle "That cool?"

The girl looked up at him for a moment and he flashed a half-smile at her. She seemed confused by the action but her face went back to being neutral seconds later. Hiccup took her phone out of her pocket and checked the time before looking back at him "I'm not going for awhile yet, but sure."

The older teen was surprised by the response "â€|You're not?"

"Nope." The younger confirmed "Scott wanted to go to the gym early and, well, I don't mind hanging around here longer than usual. So, my dad's gonna come get me when he gets out of work."

"Ohâ€|" He oh-so-smartly answered "Okay." He looked away from her and bit his lip "When should that be?"

The brunette shrugged "Around nine, I think. That's when this place closes down, isn't it?" Jack nodded. Hiccup tilted her head at him and was quiet for a moment. "What is it?" She questioned.

Jack returned his gaze to her "Huh?"

"What you wanted to tell me." Hiccup clarified "What is it? You okay?"

"Yeah, yeahâ€|" Jack replied "It's just uhâ€| how about I tell you when I start to close up? It's kindaâ€| personal."

"Sure." She smiled at him.

* * *

><p>The time seemed to just fly by after that, even though there was really nothing going on. Harry slinked out of his office and barked at Jack to do a list of chores for him, like taking out the trash and cleaning the tables. He did them without a second thought, except for the one that Hiccup was occupying. He thought it would be a little rude to make her move or anything, so he'd just do it later or skip it. It's not like he'd get fired because he forgot to clean one table or anything as stupid as that. It wasn't exactly a frequent thing for someone to eat on them anyway.<p>

Jack wound up playing games on his phone for about a half hour, since it was only the last few stragglers in the library checking stuff out and leaving. It seemed like no time at all before the clock read 8:50 and the teen decided to start locking up and shutting down the computers. He peeked at Hiccup and saw that she was getting on her coat and checking her bag, probably making sure she had everything in it. He was shutting down the desktop behind the counter when he heard her voice interrupt the silence "So, do you still wanna talk to me?"

Jack turned off the monitor and stood from his seat "Yeah, can you hang back for a minute?" He walked around the counter and stood in front of her.

"Um," Hiccup chewed her bottom lip "If you really mean it when you say 'a minute.' My dad hates having to wait and-" he heard her text tone go off in her pocket "â€| that would be him."

"Yeah, yeah. I won't keep you for long."

There was an awkward silence after that. The brunette was looking up at him expectantly; waiting for him to say whatever it was that he wanted to tell her. Jack's hands swayed at his sides and he made a popping noise with his mouth. Hiccup's expression became concerned as the silence pursued.

It looked like she was going to break the spell until Jack clapped his hands together awkwardly and rocked on his feet "Soâ€|"

Her eyes widened a bit at his clap. It was a pretty sudden change to the quiet that was over them before, maybe louder than normal with the echo in the space "Soâ€|" The brunette shyly grinned.

Jack cleared his throat "So, uhâ€| I was wondering if youâ€|" he sighed and darted his eyes to the carpet, scratching the back of his head.

His words got caught in his throat when he peered through his bangs and his eyes met Hiccup's bright green eyes. Those grassy plains were shining in the dimmed light. The collar of her green sweater stuck out of her brown overcoat and it created a bit of harmony with those meadows. Jack never noticed how much green pops when it's surrounded by dark browns before then. And the way her mouth was open just a crack as she stared up at him just made her look so cute.

Come on, you can do this. Don't back out now. He felt his cheeks turning red and he broke his gaze with her in an effort to make them stop.

He awkwardly smiled at her "â€| If you knew I got an 80 on that big history test?"

Hiccup chuckled and lightly shook her head "No, I didn't know that." A car horn sounded from outside and she turned her head towards the door before looking back at him "Is that all you wanted to tell me?" She practically pleaded.

"â€| Yeah. Just, uh, wanted you to know what a good tutor you are."

Her cheeks turned a light pink color "Well, thanks." The horn bellowed again "I'm sorry, I really gotta go. Umâ€| bye." She quickly hugged him and walked out the door.

Jack just stood there for a moment, frozen in what had just happened. He seriously just clammed up when he had his big chance. _I got an 80 on the test? Really, that's the best cover-up I could think of?!

-

Hiccup could probably sense the awkward coming off of Jack at that

point; he could see it in her face. It was like she was expecting him to tell her something bigger, you know, like he was _supposed_ to!

He turned to the closest wall and kept going until his head met it. He closed his eyes and lightly banged his forehead against the drywall.

Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupidâ€¦|

* * *

><p>I~m a terrible person, aren't I?

14. Plotting Paths

**Hello everyone~! **

**I know, I was a bit of a stinker last chapter with what I did to Jack but I took too much pleasure in having him fail once to really care. Sorry :P **

I'm making up for it this chapter, though, I swear. I even have an extra thousand words or so in this one than I normally do. I hope you like it! :D

* * *

><p>"What do you mean you messed up?!" Pippa exclaimed a little louder than she should have "How do you mess up saying something as simple as 'Hiccup, do you want to go out with me?'"<p>

Jack shrugged at the girls sitting on his couch and sunk lower into his father's favorite armchair "I don't knowâ€¦| her dad was waiting for her outside."

"THAT stopped you?" Cupcake moaned.

"Have you_ seen _her dad?" Jack questioned them, sitting back up again "He's a freaking mountain and he hates my guts!"

"He's met you once." Pippa reminded.

"Think about it; I bet every dad gets protective when his teenage daughter has male friends over." Cupcake mused.

Pippa gave her taller friend a sly grin and added "Kinda like how your mom thought we were dating when I showed up early to your birthday party last year." She playfully winked at the boy.

"Ugh, don't remind me." Jack groaned "She was going on and on about it for a week before I finally got it in her head that we're just friends." He turned himself upside down on the chair and propped his feet on the headrest, hoping the blood going to his head would help him think more clearly.

"He's probably just looking out for her, ya know?" Cupcake got back on-subject "Making sure no one'll hurt her." Jack nodded at the reasoning and threw the brunette a quick smile.

The red-headed girl piped in "Anyway, what are you gonna do now? You're still gonna ask her out, right?"

"Of course I am." Jack grumbled "I just don't know how; that's why I called you two."

Pippa looked at Jack quizzically "Why not ask your sisters?"

"Because whenever I bring Hiccup up to them, they just squeak about how 'cute' the whole thing is to them." He ran his hands down his face in frustration "At least you two try to help."

The girls exchanged a smirk and a giggle before turning their attention back to their friend.

"Okay." Pippa chirped.

"We'll do our best." Cupcake added.

"First of all," Pippa leaned forward in her seat "when are you gonna see her again?" Jack opened his mouth but she interrupted "Besides the library."

"Why not the library?" Jack questioned.

Cupcake butted in "Because you'll procrastinate it until she's about to leave again and choke when you take too longâ€¦ again."

The other girl added "If you're gonna do this, you have to be somewhere with her alone and where you can't keep putting it off."

Jack groaned and sat upright again, his head red as an apple and no good ideas to show for it "Why do you think I'm putting it off? I tried once."

"Because we know you, Jack. You're a terrible procrastinator." Pippa reclined back against the couch, putting her heads behind her head and kicking one leg over the other. Cupcake nodded in agreement and giggled at the other girl's actions.

The white-haired boy huffed "Yeah, yeahâ€¦"

"When are you gonna see her again besides work?" The brunette questioned, trying to get back on-subject.

Jack started to nervously fiddle with his hands "She invites me every weekend to go bowling with her and her friends." He stuffed his hands in his pockets in an effort to stop the fidgeting.

"Do you go?" Cupcake continued.

"When I'm not working and don't have to watch Emma, yeah." He shrugged.

Pippa uncrossed her legs and sat upright again "Okay, we're getting somewhere now." She commented.

Cupcake leaned forward in her seat "When's the next time they're meeting up for it?"

"Tonight."

"Can you go tonight?"

Jack thought over his schedule for a moment before replying "Unless Ana magically gets plans tonight, yes." Emma wasn't quite old enough to be left home by herself, so the two older Overlands tended to pick fights over who had to cancel their weekend plans to watch her. It was basically a miracle if their mother was home before nine at night, long hours at the office keeping her from coming home any sooner.

"There you go." The red-headed teen declared.

"What?" Jack stammered "Her friends are gonna be there; how is that 'getting her alone?'"

"Simple." Cupcake claimed "You pull her aside and ask if you two can talk alone."

"Or you tell her friends what's going on and ask if they can, ya know, make themselves scarce for a few minutes." Pippa interjected.

"Then ask away." The pudgy brunette finished.

Jack nodded along with the advice "You two make it sound easy."

"Well, we kind of know how girls work." Cupcake smirked.

The smaller girl gave her friend the same expression back "Trust us, Jack. It is as easy as we make it sound. People just blow it out of proportion because of what they see in movies-"

"Or because people think Romeo and Juliet is the most romantic thing ever to existâ€|" The larger girl mumbled.

"Ugh, here we goâ€|" Pippa complained.

"What?" Cupcake inquired "It's not."

Jack opted out of getting involved in the girls' bickering, so he just stayed silent as it went on, eventually tuning them out all together. The last thing he caught was Cupcake declaring that Romeo must have been a complete idiot to kill himself because the girl he met less than a week ago was dead.

His mind traveled elsewhere, back to his failure at the library the night before. He'd been beating himself up about it since he got home that night and it seemed that only getting advice from his friends successfully consoled his thoughts. He may have screwed up last night, but that in no way meant that he couldn't try again.

* * *

><p>From the moment Hiccup left the library the previous night,

something about Jack's conversation with her just kept bothering her. She didn't really know what it was but it seemedâ€¦ strange for him. Why'd he have to pull her aside just to say that he did well on the test she helped him prepare for? It wasn't like people in a library would care if she was tutoring him or anything; people went to the library to learn, didn't they? It didn't seem like that big of a deal to her yet Jack made it sound like what he was going to tell her was something bigger than just 'I got an eighty on my test because of you.'

There had to be something more to it, something that Jack was trying to make subtle or that he just chickened out of saying all-together. Hiccup could hear in his voice that he was nervous too, even a bit anxious. He did well, she was proud of him for getting the grade that he did and she would have expressed that better if her dad hadn't been blaring the horn in the parking lot at the time.

She might even be seeing him later that night for bowling with everyone else. How was she supposed to fix this confused atmosphere around them if she didn't even know what was wrong in the first place?!

Hiccup huffed and sat up on her bed, only just remembering that Toothless had splayed himself across her legs to keep her from moving away while he was taking his nap. She cracked a smile and giggled as she scratched the Great Dane's ear "Bud, you gotta move." The dog let out a sigh, which she returned with her own "I know; your life is such a challenge, huh?" He opened one eye for a brief moment before closing it again and nuzzling his nose into the crease between her legs. She pushed him away "No. Toothless, get off." Still, he refused to listen.

_Okay, I need to change tactics _She reasoned, scanning the floor and surface of her bed for some kind of a solution. Her eyes landed on his fish-shaped squeaky toy beside her bed and scooped it up. "Hey, Toothless~!" She sang. His head immediately perked up as she squeezed the toy and it made the noise that every dog loves. Hiccup waved it around and his head followed it wherever it went "What's this, huh? This your fish?" She taunted. His powerful tail started thumping against the mattress and his ears stood upright, senses keen on what was about to occur.

"Go get it!" Hiccup threw it into the hallway and Toothless bounded after it, allowing the brunette to finally get her numbing legs back to herself. Squeaking resonated outside her bedroom and Toothless came running back to her with the fish in his mouth, squeaking it with his jaw as he went. "Tricked you, bud." She smirked. A slobber-covered plastic fish was dropped into her lap and Hiccup gave a disgusted look to the canine "Really?" Toothless sat down and his tail started wagging as fast as an airplane propeller "Alright, alright." She grabbed the fish with two fingers and flung it into the hall again. Toothless quickly followed it and tried to catch it as it moved on the ground, causing him to bang his head against Scott's bedroom door across the hall.

Hiccup couldn't help but laugh at the sight "You okay, bud?"

Toothless shook off the impact and sneezed before trotting back to his favorite human and resting his head on her lap. In response,

Hiccup started stroking him and her mind wandered back to her previous train of thought.

Could Jack really have been trying to do what she thought he was doing? Sure, the two of them held each other's gazes for a little longer than normal and the older teen did freeze up every time the girl hugged him, though that could have been just a reflex or somethingâ€¦ people did that, right? But that didn't mean that Jack felt something more for her, did it? People could just be really close or share intimate moments without being a couple. Hell, she did that all the time with her friends. There was one time some guy thought Hiccup and Astrid were lesbians because they shared an ice cream sundae at the mall once. They only knew that because he was enough of an idiot to walk up to them and say "So, is there room for one more?" Well, it was safe to say that after that comment, Astrid knocked whatever weird kink that was out of himâ€¦ along with all the air in his lungs.

Gods, she didn't even know if Jack liked her that way, why was she getting her hopes up? For all she knew, he was just being friendly andâ€¦ awkwardâ€¦ but Jack was kind of a dork anyway, even if he wouldn't admit it himself. Oh well, he was a cute dork, at least. And she was one too, so how could she complain?

Ugh, maybe she needed another mind to help her sort this out. She stood and went across the hall, knocking on her brother's bedroom door before entering the space.

"Hey, Scott?" She found the cluttered room in its usual state of disarray that Scott preferred to call organized chaos. But its owner was nowhere to be found inside. _He must have gone to the garage, thenâ€¦_ Hiccup reasoned.

She descended the stairs, Toothless on her heels, and swung the corner into the kitchen. She could hear the bass line of music vibrating on the floor as she approached the door to the house's attached garage. Yep. Scott was in there.

She opened the door and was hit with the sounds of wailing guitars and beating drums to match words that she didn't care enough about to understand. Hiccup slowly pressed farther into the space and found her brother and Derek both reclined in his truck, with their feet on the dashboard. She rolled her eyes before screaming "Scott!"

Scott cracked his eyes open upon hearing his name "What?!" He shouted, in an effort to be heard over the blaring rock music.

"You guys busy?!" Hiccup yelled back.

"Kinda!" He grunted as he sat up a little straighter, hitting Derek on the knee for him to do the same before he turned down the volume of his truck's radio "What do you want?"

"Wellâ€¦ I have something I could use a guy's perspective on." She claimed "But, since the only ones around are you and Derek, you two'll have to do."

"Ha ha." Scott climbed out of the truck from his side. "Very funny, Hiccup." He came around to meet his sister while Derek just stayed in the truck and turned to face them.

The older of the boys rested his arms on the open window "What's up?"

Hiccup kept her gaze on her brother as she asked "You know Jack by now, right?"

"Who?" Derek questioned.

"Ugh, one of her friends." Scott lazily filled in.

The older boy was silent for a minute before something seemed to click in his head "The kid with the white hair you told me about?"

"Yeah." The younger male sighed "What about him?" He asked as he crossed his arms and leaned on the hood of the truck.

"He was acting weird last night. It was almost nothing, but I can't stop thinking about it."

The older Haddock suddenly became more interested "Weird how?"

"I was talking to him until Dad came to get me." Hiccup explained "And he was locking up, since it was closing anyway. He kept me back for a few minutes because he wanted to tell me something." She looked away and started fiddling with a strand of her hair "But then Dad kept honking the horn and texting me before he could and then he told me about how well he did on the test I helped him study for. And he looked kind of like—" She stopped playing with her hair and settled for waving her hands around as she spoke instead "like that wasn't what he meant to say but—" went with it, I guess? I don't know, it just was weird for him, ya know?"

The two boys looked at each other for a minute before Derek smirked "Dude, you owe me ten bucks."

Scott groaned and pulled out his wallet, taking out a ten and giving it to his best friend "Fine, you win. Happy?"

"Very." Derek confirmed "My lunch is on you now."

Hiccup looked from one to the other in confusion "What are you guys talking about?"

The scruffy brunet gritted his teeth before replying "He and I made a bet."

"He was complaining about you and Jack hanging around so much so I bet Snot Face here that he wouldn't be able to scare the guy off for shits and giggles." Scott slapped his friend's shoulder at hearing the nickname, to which Derek just chuckled.

Hiccup gave a confused look "Why would you—"

"Oh my god, are you that blind?!" Scott moaned.

His sister's eyes widened at his rising voice and she took a tentative step back "—What?"

"Oh my god." Scott hit his head on the side of the truck in frustration.

Hiccup looked to Derek who sighed and shook his head, black curls bouncing at the action "Jack's got a thing for you, Henrika; you can see it on his face."

The brunette's focus turned to Derek at the statement "He does?"

"_Yes_." Her brother angrily grumbled.

Hiccup was taken aback by her brother's behavior towards the whole idea and she only became more confused, her face scrunching up and her lips perusing into a flat line "What's your problem?"

Scott just grumbled and Derek decided to take over for him "He's just mad because his little sister gets more action than he does."

"I am not!" The dark brunet protested.

Derek's dark brown eyes rolled up to the ceiling and his face relaxed into a soft smile that appeared to be holding back a chuckle. "Sure, sure. Just like how you're not mad because Heather shot you down last week-"

"Can you _shut up_?!" Scott's voice cracked somewhere in that last outburst. He turned his attention back to his friend with anger clear on his beet red face.

Hiccup snickered at the mentioning of a girl's name "Oooh~" she teased "Who's Heather?"

"None of your business." Her brother retorted. He stomped towards her and pushed her towards the door, his big hands leading her by the curve in her back "You got your answer; just go."

"Come on," She playfully continued "Throw me a bone here. Do I know her? Does she go to school with us?"

Scott shoved her forward until she was beyond the threshold of the door "No and no." He growled "Now leave us alone." He slammed the door shut without another word. Hiccup could hear the door lock from the other side and the music turn up loud again not long afterwards.

Toothless was laying down on the kitchen floor, tail thumping against the tile when his master's gaze fell on him once more. Hiccup just stood there for a moment, listening to the muffled song playing in the background and her dog's occasional grunts and whimpers for attention. But it all faded into the back of her mind as one thought repeated in her head again and again. If what they were saying was right, Jack _did_ have feelings for her. Feelings thatâ€ she could probably return. But she wasn't totally sure. This felt different than any other crush or relationship she'd ever had. She was uncertain and scared but, if she was honest with herself, she really did have some kind of feelings for Jack. She loved being around him and listening to his jokes and silly stories featuring his antics at school or home. And, plus, she'd be lying if she said that she never wondered how his lips would feel against hers or just how contagious

the scent of pine on him really was.

There was no denying it anymore. No avoiding it. No deeming that the reason for these thoughts and feelings was her misreading signals. She liked Jack and she had to do something about it. Tonight, she'd talk to him. She'd make sure she was correct and, if she was, she would ask him out. If he was going to fumble like an idiot to tell her how he feels, she'd do the same and try to show that his message got across; no matter how choppy it was when she received it.

Yes— this was going to happen. Tonight, she would put all of these itching thoughts to rest.

* * *

><p>When Hiccup hopped in Val's car to be taken to the Bog Bowler, the sun had long since gone down and the chill in the air had dropped into a frigid cold. It was one of the things that she hated the most about the winter. Nearly all of the time where it was light out was spent in school. In some cases, she was even in classrooms that had no windows to remind her that the sun had, in fact, not completely retired. Gods, she hated having classes in the school's basement. It just felt even more like a prison than school did normally for her. She loved learning and all, but she just wished that she could have fewer distractions and, well, less idiots wasting class time, for lack of a better word.<p>

For the most part, the car ride was silent. Hiccup's mind was focused on what she'd be attempting to do later that night, hoping for the best. After all, the worst Jack could say to her was 'no.' But, according to Scott and Derek, that didn't seem likely to happen. They weren't the most reliable sources in the world but whatever. Maybe it was time she took a little risk and stuck her neck out.

It wasn't until they were almost at the bowling alley did the silence become interrupted "So, who's gonna be there tonight?" Her mother piped up "Usual crowd?"

Hiccup shrugged, not letting her eyes stray from the window on the passenger side "Yeah, Clueless has been back at school for a while now."

"Is Jack going to be there?" Val questioned.

The girl's attention turned to her mother in confusion "Yeah, why?"

She shrugged back "Just wondering, that's all. You two have been hanging out a lot lately." There was a pause before she added on "He's really cute too."

"Mooom!" Hiccup groaned as she leaned back in her seat, freckled cheeks starting to heat up.

Val giggled "What? He's not around to hear."

"Can you just not?" Hiccup let her head fall into her hands.

She felt a gentle nudge on her left shoulder as her mother continued to laugh "Okay, okay." It was quiet for a moment before the car came

to a stop "Here we are."

The younger Haddock picked her head up and let her hands fall back into her lap. She saw that they were at their destination and smiled at her mother "Thanks, Mom."

Her mother nodded "I'll pick you up at ten, okay?" Hiccup nodded back before climbing out of the car "Tell Jack I said 'hi!'" Val laughed again as her daughter moaned, shut the car door, and walked inside the building.

"Thank the gods she doesn't hang around on bowling night!" She mumbled to herself as she entered and walked up to the shoe counter "Hi, Mulch." She greeted.

"Evenin', Hiccup." The man replied. He turned around to the shoe cubbies behind him and started looking for the girl's size "Anything new? Maybe a growth spurt since last week?"

Hiccup scoffed "Yeah, like I'm gonna get any taller. I've been the same size in everything since seventh grade."

Mulch grabbed a pair of shoes "You can always hope. I mean," He plopped the shoes on the counter for her to take "you could just be a late bloomer."

"I am in everything else." She grumbled as she took the shoes "Thanks, Mulch."

"No problem."

"Hiccup!" Astrid hollered from the table she and Cam were seated at. When she gained the brunette's attention, she waved and Cam quickly joined her sister in doing so.

The brunette made her way over to her friends, taking a seat across from both of them before starting to switch out her shoes "What's up?"

"Nothin' much." Cam folded her arms on the tabletop and rested her head on them "You?"

"Is Jack coming tonight?" Astrid added.

Hiccup tied her shoes as she spoke "Yes, he is. And I kinda wanted to talk to you two about something."

The scraggly blonde perked up a bit at the statement "What about?"

"Um!" Her laces were tied, so she lost the thing that was keeping her hands busy until this point. So, they trailed to the hem of her green and black sweater "I was thinking after maybe one round or two!" She bit her bottom lip and started to blush "I was going to take Jack aside and uh! ask him out?"

The Hoffersons' faces both lit up, Cam's head lifting from her arms and her untamed locks falling back into place.

"Really?" Astrid gaped.

"Yeahâ€|" Hiccup whimpered "But, if it's busy tonight, could you likeâ€| make some excuse to leave for a few so I can?"

The twins looked from one to another, a faint smile showing on Astrid's face.

"I don't see why not." Cam claimed.

"Same." Her sister agreed. They both turned back to the brunette "No problem, just tell us when okay?"

Hiccup nodded "But I don't know when he's coming so, if Jack gets here before Felix, fill him in?" She pleaded.

"Of course." Astrid assured.

"Thanks." Hiccup smiled softly at her friends.

"Sure." Cam lazily waved her hand around "Jack's coolâ€|" She pretended to inspect her chipped nails "for a boy, anyway."

The brunette snorted "I guess."

* * *

><p>As usual, Jack was the last one to get to the Bog Bowler. Bertha had just brought out their dinner when he sat down. She was apparently trying to make her own corndog recipe and she was using the group of teens as her test subjects. Along with the slew of corndogs sticking out of something that looked like what held cotton candy at carnivals, there was the usual giant basket of French fries and surplus of condiments to go with them. And, Jack had to say, they corndogs were pretty damn good. Though, he had more fun putting the condiments on them than anything. Cam caught on when she noticed Jack drawing a smiley face on his in ketchup and followed suit. She drew on a smiley face too, but she added on a shirt and tie with some mustard. Then, the two started joking about eating brains when they took a bite out of their corndogs' "heads." Astrid just shook her head while Hiccup smirked at the two of them, being the next to make a corndog person with relish for hair.<p>

Once the five teens were all full, they opted to start their first set of the night. This time there were no teams. Or, rather, it started out having no teams. Somewhere around the fifth round in that set, Cam snuck over to Jack and decided that the two of them were going to gang up against the other three to try to get a new high score. Of course, the older boy agreed for that sake of having a little fun. About two rounds later, Astrid, Hiccup, and Felix caught on and decided that they were going to be a team against the two of them and whoever had the highest combined scores would be the winners.

The two teams were twenty points apart in the last round, with Hiccup's team in the lead. That was when Jack and Cam's competitive sides r_eally_ came out and they aspired to make as many strikes as possible so that they could win. Cam went up first and managed a spare with another seven pins tacked onto it. Then, all of the opposing team had their turns, landing a strike, a spare, and another twelve points between the three of them. It would have been more if

Felix hadn't gotten the dreaded seven-ten split and only knocked down one of the pins on his second try. Jack was thankful for that. Otherwise, they might not even have had a chance at winning.

Then, it was Jack's turn. He had to get at least a strike and a spare in order to pull ahead of them and win this game. He took a breath and told himself that it wouldn't be that big of a deal to manage as he stepped up to the ball rack and took his dark blue bowling ball into his hands. He threw the ball down the lane and downed eight pins. Thankfully, the two he missed were right next to each other. So it was no problem for him to knock them down in his next turn and get a spare. He took another deep breath as the pins were set back up and his ball rolled back up the rack. _Come on, Jack. You can do this. Give meâ€|_ He rolled the ball down the lane _a strike!_

He stood still as a statue as the ball became a blue blur flying towards the pins. It was moving down the center of the aisle, which was exactly what Jack was hoping for. All it had to do was hit the pins just the right way and thenâ€|

The exhilarating sound of the ball colliding with the collapsing pins resonated in the alley and Jack jumped up shouting "Strike!"

Cam cheered and ran up to her teammate "I knew ya could do it, Overland!" She playfully punched the boy in the arm before she started whooping for joy again.

Jack couldn't help but smile at the sight, especially since the alley was almost dead so not many people were bothered by Cam's screamingâ€| or her bragging to her twin about being victorious. Felix counted up the numbers and Cam and Jack did, in fact, win. Though, it was a narrow win. Had he and Hiccup not had a few bad turns at the beginning of the game, he was convinced that they would have won for sure. Slowly, the noise started to die down but Jack's smile didn't leave his face. This is why he loved coming here to hang out with them. They were just so much fun, even if it was a smaller crowd than he was used to. They sure made up for it with their personalities and energy towards everything. It was just enjoyable to be there andâ€| he really wanted to keep doing it every chance he could.

"Hey, Jack?" He turned around to the sound of Hiccup's voice "Can I, uhâ€| can we talk for a minute?" He noticed that she was fiddling with her hands and nervously tapping her foot against the hardwood floor.

Jack's concern through, though, when his eyes met hers. Those meadows that Jack had come to adore were wide and glazed over just a bit, like she was scared of something and trying to face the source anyway. They weren't as bright as they normally were, probably another side effect to whatever she was feeling at that moment. It almost hurt to see them like that, filled with concern and worry. He lowered his voice from its previous high and it filled with exactly what he was feeling "Yeah, sure." He stepped towards her as she stood from her seat "Are you okay; something wrong?"

She seemed to be caught off by the question but shook it off "No, justâ€| something's been on my mind all day andâ€| I wanted to talk to you about it." Her freckles started to vanish under a dusting of blush flaring on her cheeks. Jack couldn't help but find the sight

adorable, even though he only saw it for a moment before her back turned to him and she wandered towards the empty arcade room near the front door.

Jack followed her at a speed walk until he caught up with her. As the two entered the dimmed space, not a word was said by either. Then, Jack made a realization and turned to the shorter teen "I actually wanted to talk to you too."

Her eyes flicked up at him "You did?"

"Yeah." The older confirmed "I uhâ€¦ I didn't get to sayâ€¦" He stuffed his hands into his pockets and rocked on his feet "when I saw you yesterday."

The younger stopped in front of a racing game with a chair attached and sat in it "Oh?"

White hair bounced as he nodded "But, uh, you can go first."

"No, no, you go first." Hiccup insisted.

"Okay, umâ€¦" He walked to the chair designated for a second player and let himself fall into it "I've been thinking about this for awhile now andâ€¦ talking it over with my friends and uhâ€¦" He shook out his hair before finally looking at her again "I was wondering ifâ€¦ if you'd- if we couldâ€¦" He groaned and leaned back in the seat in frustration, chilled hands combing through his hair and his arms covering his eyes.

Hiccup leaned on one of the arms of her seat "What is it?"

Jack untangled his hands from his hair and laid them to rest on his knees, sighing "If you'd like to go out sometimeâ€¦ on a date?"

Hiccup's eyes widened and he saw the beginnings of a smile forming across her face.

* * *

><p>*Sits back and waits for people to scream at me*

15. Alone in the Arcade

moans* I am so sorry this update took so long; the last two months of school kicked my ass with projects and homework and exam reviews and ugh... I didn't have time for anything, I am so sorry guys. At least now I'm on summer vacation so hopefully I'll get back to some sort of schedule on these updates. Unless I re-start too many projects or something... which I might do... *awkwardly smiles

**So uh, yeah... I'm sorry I had to leave you all on a cliffhanger like that last time but I'm back now. **

* * *

><p>"â€|If we couldâ€| if you'd like to go out sometimeâ€| on a date?"<p>

Hiccup's eyes widened as Jack spoke and she stared at him in disbelief.

Were theyâ€|. Were they seriously trying to do the same thing here? Hiccup knew why she dragged Jack over here butâ€| she didn't expect that to happen. Or, not exactly. She expected the scenario but for the roles to be switchedâ€| for Jack to be the one trying to figure out how to answer her and stare at her like an idiot, like she knew she was doing to him at that moment.

They were. They were both trying to meet the same goal. That was her confirmation! Jack _did _have feelings for her! She wasn't misreading anything!

She blushed and started to chuckle at the thoughts running through her head before she peeked back at Jack and saw his face switch from hopeful anxiety to confused hurt.

Her laughter immediately stopped upon seeing his face _Oh, real smooth, Hiccupâ€|_ She scolded herself_ Real smooth._

Blue eyes narrowed slightly. Hiccup couldn't tell if it was out of uncertainty or irritation "What's so funny?" Jack inquired.

Hiccup forced her face to go back to a neutral expression and she mumbled out a "Sorryâ€|" She started to bite her lip and play with her hands "It's justâ€|" A miniscule smile spread on her face as she looked back at him in the dim lighting "â€| because I brought you over here so I could ask you out." The look that came onto Jack next Hiccup couldn't describe. It was kind of like the look a person gives when they don't know exactly what's going on but they can assume that it's a good thing. At least, that's how it looked in the quick glance she got before she turned away from him in a poor attempt to hide from him "Stupid, right?"

There was a stagnant silence before Jack finally opened his mouth again "You're seriousâ€|?"

"Yeah, I justâ€|"Hiccup sighed and got out of the game chair, starting to pace in front of the system and the other teen. At this point, her nerves led her to wave her arms aimlessly in an effort to tell her story a bit better "I got a weird vibe from you last night and it was bugging me all night and this morning and so I went to Scott for insight and he told me that it meant you had a thing for me and I wasn't sure butâ€|" She groaned and threw her hands up in the air "and I-I have some kind of feelings for you too and so I told myself I'd talk to you tonight and maybe that'd get this feeling in my gut stop but now it's only worse!"

"Hey, hey, slow down." Jack commented as he stood too. Hiccup stopped where she was and closed her mouth. She was completely unaware that her speech had been speeding up as she spoke. Gods, she had to learn to control that "You lost me after 'Scott forâ€|'" he tried to think of the word that came next "'Frightâ€|'?"

"Insight." The brunette huffed "Sorry, Iâ€| I do that when I'm nervousâ€|" She ducked her face away from his again "Sorryâ€|"

"Stop apologizing; it's okay." A cool hand fell onto her shoulder. Hiccup looked up at him and met his icy blue eyes "Just slow down a bit."

The brunette nodded and gulped, her throat suddenly dry for no reason at all "I-I gotta work on thatâ€¦"

Jack gave a crooked smile at her and let his hand fall from her shoulder "How about we start over?" Hiccup nodded and he smiled wider, perfect teeth glimmering despite the poor lighting "Okay." He sighed and rocked on his feet "So, wannaâ€¦ go out sometime? Maybe a movie and some dinner?"

Hiccup smiled up at him "I think I'd like that. Justâ€¦ how about we hold off on the movie andâ€¦ just hang out somewhere and get to know each other better?"

"Works for me." Jack agreed "Next weekend, maybe?"

Starting the next weekend, all of the schools were being let out for winter vacation. Aside from Christmas and New Year's Eve, she was free every day until school started up again. She checked over her mental schedule one more time before she answered him "Saturday would work."

Jack gave her a warm smile "It's a date then."

They stayed where they were for a moment just looking around the room, as if the walls held the instructions on what to do next. Finding none, Hiccup stammered "Uh, maybeâ€¦ maybe we should, uh, get back to the others so we can play another set."

"Y-yeahâ€¦" Jack complied.

The two started back for the bowling lanes slowly as awkward glances were thrown between them. Shy hands found each other as they swayed at their owners' sides and intertwined. Neither one appeared to be objecting the other's action, so they remained where they were as the pair walked back to their friends.

Cam was the first one to notice them and she perked up, shouting over to them "Yay or nay?!"

Hiccup smiled and went to respond, but was beaten to the punch when Jack lifted their joined hands higher in the air so that the others could see. Astrid and Cam cheered and Felix joined a little later, clearly pondering what just happened with a quizzical expression and a raised eyebrow.

Astrid ran up to the two of them and hugged them before turning her attention to the small brunette "I knew you could do it."

Hiccup's eyes zipped around the room, trying to find something less stressful to focus her attention on "Uh, actuallyâ€¦ about that-

"Are you saying you doubted her, Astrid?" Jack interjected, his signature smirk creeping onto his face.

The braided blonde tried to laugh it off "What? No, I just figured I'd have to push her a little harder to get her to actually do it. Right, Hiccup?" She playfully punched the smaller girl in the shoulder.

Hiccup winced at the slight pain that went through her arm but she smiled nonetheless "Let's just say I had someâ€¦ extra motivation." She looked up at Jack and they shared a smirk.

* * *

><p>The rest of the night went smoothly enough. The group of teens played one more set before they ran out of free games and decided that it was time to disperse. The Hofferson sisters waited with their friends for awhile afterwards, to make sure everyone else got into their cars safely. Felix's mom was the first one to arrive, as usual. The blond boy waved them all good-bye as the van drove off and into the night. That was when Hiccup remembered that she forgot to text her mom that they were done early that night. She pulled out her cell phone and started to send Val a text to come and get her.<p>

This caught Jack's attention, turning to her from under the hood of his hoodie "Something wrong?"

"Nah," Hiccup replied "just forgot to tell mom we were done."

"I could take you home if you want." He offered.

At first, Hiccup was kind of reluctant. But, as she thought about it, the more it made sense to her. Jack knew where she lived, he was there, and he was going home anyway. It was a lot easier than having her mom come down and get her. It wasn't that far a drive but still. She was probably busy with work, even at this hour.

"Okay." She answered "You don't mind?"

"Why would I mind?" The taller teen questioned. He took her hand and gently pulled her away from the building's front doors "Come on."

"Well, okayâ€¦" She murmured. Hiccup turned around to say good-bye to Cam and Astrid, but the twins were already gone. They probably heard Jack's offer and made themselves scarce like the _great_ friends they are. Seriously, what if Jack was secretly a serial killer? Hiccup could have been dead by now!

Luckily it didn't turn out Jack was a serial killerâ€¦ yet. She giggled to herself at the thought as the white-haired boy drove her home. Of course, she knew the chances of that were unlikely anyway. But it was kind of an interesting thought to her. Gods, she had to stop watching those crime shows; they were starting to mess with her head.

They pulled up to the Haddock house and Hiccup tentatively got out of the car, muttering a good-bye to the driver. She was still trying to comprehend what had happened earlier that night. It didn't exactly scare her but it was a load on her mind. But, come on, getting a date was always a big deal for her; it didn't happen hat often.

So it kind of surprised her when Jack got out of the car too and met

her halfway around the vehicle. He awkwardly pulled his lips into a grin and she could see a faint blush on his cheeks and neck "Is it okay if I, uhâ€¦ I walk you to the door?"

Hiccup smiled and shrugged "You don't have to; it's right there." She tilted her head towards the front door, which was just up a pathway and set of four stairs that went up to the front porch. It really wasn't that far of a walk.

"I know. I justâ€¦" His face got a little more red "want to."

The brunette took his hand and led him up to the front porch, stopping in front of the white wooden door. She smiled up at him, thinking it was sweet that he wanted to do such silly little things like this with her. She thought it was probably because he didn't quite want to leave her yet, which made her think it was even cuter.

Wow, these thoughts were foreign to her. She almost never thought about things most girls seem to, like boys or that kind of relationship crap. Butâ€¦ maybe she was because she really liked Jack.

"So, uhâ€¦" Jack untangled his hand from hers "See you later?"

"Yep." Hiccup chirped, wrapping her arms around the boy's neck "Good night."

She felt gentle arms wrap around her as Jack returned the hug "Good night." His voice was quieter than normal. It sounded moreâ€¦ calm and happy; like he wasn't afraid of saying the wrong thing or having his tongue slip. It was similar to the voice Hiccup had heard her parents use on one another after they made up from a fight and knew that everything was okay. And it comforted her to hear that tone come from Jack, even though she didn't completely understand why.

Hiccup allowed her eyes to close as the pair let the embrace carry on for longer than their previous ones did. Before, they were just quick, brief moments of contact between the two of them. They were Hiccup's rushed efforts to try and show the boy affection when her nerves got the better of her or, more recently, when someone was pushing her to say good bye to him. She took in Jack's scent and exhaled with relief. This hug was more than affection. It was reassurance. It was comfort. It was a reason to look forward to what was coming up for the two of them: their first real date.

Slowly, Hiccup pulled away from Jack and smiled at him "Bye."

"Bye." Jack murmured. He took his arms off of her "I'll text you later in the week andâ€¦ we can figure out what we wanna do, okay?"

"Okay." The brunette put her hand on the doorknob "Night." She said one more time.

The older teen chuckled "Bye" in response and he backed down the small flight of stairs and went back to his car.

Hiccup waited until he got into the driver's seat before she slipped

inside and closed the door behind her. The moving light in the small window on the front door told her that Jack had pulled out and was on his way home too. She smiled up at the fading lights before turning around and going farther inside. Toothless hadn't ambushed her yet. He must have been outside or sleeping somewhere, if that was the case. She wandered into the living room looking for him.

"You're home early." The teen jumped at the sudden voice, quickly looking up to find her mother flipping through one of her traveling photo albums "I thought you'd call to get picked up."

"I was but Jack offered to take me home soâ€¦" She shuffled one of her feet over the floor "here I am."

"Uh huhâ€¦" Val gave a knowing smirk before she turned back to the album and took out a picture of a dense rainforest.

"Where are you looking at?" Hiccup asked curiously.

"Brazil." Her mother responded fondly "This was one of the trips I went on by myself. A wildlife magazine paid me to take pictures of jaguars that live in the area I was visiting. Of course, I had to get a few scenery shots and stuff for myself along the way."

"Ah." Silence fell between the women on the Haddock home for a minute or two before the younger broke the silence again "Where's Toothless?"

"Your brother put him outside a few minutes ago."

"Oh, okayâ€¦" It got quiet again "Um, mom?"

Val didn't even look up from her album "Hmm?"

"Are weâ€¦ doing anything next Saturday?" Hiccup wondered.

Val was quiet for a few seconds before looking at her daughter "I don't think so, why?"

"Because uhâ€¦" Green eyes darted down to the carpet "I'm going out with Jack that day."

The photo album was closed "Oh, are you now?" Val sat closer to the edge of her seat on the couch, clearly interested in what the freckled girl had to say next.

"That's okayâ€¦ right?" She re-gained eye contact with her mother and crookedly grinned.

"Are you kidding?" The taller brunette questioned as she stood "Of course it is! I mean, your father might think a little differently about it but I can work that out with him later. It shouldn't be a problem, dear."

Hiccup blinked at the reaction and did her best to keep a smile "Okayâ€¦ great." She rubbed her arm nervously.

Val grabbed her daughter's arms and pulled her towards the couch "So what happened tonight? Tell me!" She sat down and patted the spot next to her.

Hiccup reluctantly sat down and began to retell the evening's events to her mother, who was listening intently with a stupid grin on her face, as if it was happening to her and not her daughter. But Hiccup assumed at this point that was how all mothers reacted to their kids finding dates. The one time she could recall of Astrid getting asked out, Bertha found out a week later and seemed a little upset that Astrid turned the guy downâ€| even after she found out it was Scott.

But at least she wasn't the only one that found their situation funny. When Val heard that Hiccup was trying to accomplish the same thing as Jack, she let out a tiny laugh too and made a joke about it being "meant to be." Hiccup just rolled her eyes and kept talking until the story was over.

Conversation drifted to other topics after that. Toothless started scratching at the door after a little while and jumped all over Hiccup when he saw it was her letting him back inside. Then, he joined the women of the house in the living room and guarded them while they continued to converse, poised right between Hiccup's feet so she was sitting kind of awkwardly.

Stefan came home not long after with sweat on his brow. Toothless ran to greet him and almost knocked over a lamp with his tailâ€| again.

"Hey, Toothless." He patted the Great Dane on the head and pushed him out of the way so he could come farther inside "Hi, Henrika."

"Hi, dad." She replied.

Val put the album back on the table and stood to meet her husband "How was work? A little rough?"

"Nah." He kissed her "I just met Gobber for a quick run before I came home. The man's been telling me he needs to work out but he only does when I make him." He chuckled and went towards the stairs "He might as well pay me."

"Oh," Val went after him "we have something to tell you, dear."

Stefan stopped on the staircase and turned around "Can it wait until after I shower?"

"Uh, I think you'd rather hear this now than later." Hiccup got up from her seat and wandered to the landing, stopping next to her mother.

"What is it?" He questioned. He thought for a second before guessing "Did Scott do anything?"

Val chuckled "No. This has to do with Henrika."

"Oh." Some relief seemed to wash over him at that moment "Then what is it?"

Hiccup started to speak when her mother nudged her back "Uh, you remember Jackâ€| right?" Her father nodded with a hard glare,

probably trying to stay neutral until he heard the whole thing "He uhâ€| he and I are" she cleared her throat "gonna go out next weekend. On a dateâ€|" She could feel her face heating up under her father's gaze "I-I was just asking mom if you guys had any plans to make sure that I could."

Stefan's face appeared to harden into a glare as she rambled on. Thick auburn brows furrowed closer to his green eyes "Did he now?"

* * *

><p>"So, where are you taking her?" Ana scooted closer to the edge of her bed and flashed a big, perfect smile "Any ideas?" Her eyes followed her younger brother as he wandered over to her desk and sat in its chair. Wow, she was peppy about this whole thing.<p>

"Nothing really big." Jack sighed, making himself comfortable "I was thinking we'd just wander around the mall or something." He saw his sister's eyebrow rise before she made a disapproving expression "What else can we do?" He raised his voice a bit.

"You can always take her ice skating." The colorful college student suggested.

"You know why that's a bad idea." Jack slouched in his sister's desk chair and shuddered "Besides, I don't even know if she skates."

"Or how aboutâ€|" She puffed out her cheeks in thought "a nice walk?"

Jack sat up straighter upon hearing the idea "It's cold outside!"

"I know. It'll give you an excuse to hold her close to you, stupid." He hugged herself and giggled with a smirk "I'm pretty sure you'll both like that."

"Ana, we don't even know if we're actually a thing yet."

"You're kidding right?" Ana stood from her bed and fixed the legs of her pink pajama bottoms "You've been into her for, what, three months now and you're suddenly thinking that way?"

"I thought you told me the first few dates are the most important ones?" The white-haired teen recalled.

"They are." Ana confirmed "That's why I'm trying to give you better ideas than going to the mall." She crossed her arms and popped out one of her hips "It's not exactly a romantic place to take a date."

Jack threw up his arms "Fine. Any other ideas, Miss Love Expert?"

Ana's neutral expression contorted into a grin that actually looked kind of scary "Yes, actually." Her brother moaned "You're the one that asked, so just stop me when I get to one you actually like."

* * *

><p>The next week of classes were hard on Hiccup and her friends,

since they were taking midterms the whole time. But, for some reason, it seemed to fly by. Friday was there before she knew it and she went to bed that night excited for the events that were going to come in less than twenty-four hours.<p>

It was a night that ticked by slowly in anticipation and fear of her first date with Jack. She was excited because she really did like him and she couldn't wait to hug him again or hold his hand for longer than two minutes. She wanted to learn more about him and try to figure out what it was about the tall boy with white hair, pale skin and blue eyes that were so deep that it should be criminal that she liked so much. She wanted to know what it was about him that made her stomach twist and her face grow hot. What it was that made her so happy when he was around.

But her fear also made its appearances in her mind. She was afraid that she would mess up somehow and that Jack wouldn't feel this way about her anymore. She hoped that these feelings of hers were more than just physical attraction, and the same went for Jack. Hiccup wasn't sure what she'd do if she suddenly stopped feeling this way for him, which she knew had a good chance of happening. Her last experience with dating didn't end up as well as it could have and it sucked becauseâ€| she knew that he still had feelings for her. He probably still does now. It wouldn't be good at all if the same thing happened with Jack; where the relationship became one-sided and they'd have to swallow their feelings forever because the other doesn't feel the same way back. She felt a lump in her throat at the thought of it and rolled over in her bed.

The night went on in a similar manner until she fell asleep sometime around two A.M. She didn't wake up the next day until sometime around eleven when Toothless decided she'd been in bed long enough and jumped on top of her to wake her up, licking her face for good measure. After some effort, she managed to push the massive beast off of her and went about her day, the date in the near hours approaching quickly.

She and Jack had texted in the middle of the week and he told her that they were going to a plaza in town to hang out for the evening. Hiccup had been there a few times with her family or friends and there were a lot of different shops in the area and things to do. It sounded good to her and he was coming to pick her up at six that nightâ€| and she thanked whatever higher power made her dad have to work longer than usual that night so he wouldn't be home when Jack came to get her. At least that problem was taken care of.

As the time approached, Hiccup just continued to surprise herself with her thought patterns that day. She must have changed her outfit four times, she did her best to keep her bangs from falling into her face, and she even decided to throw on a little makeup to cover the small scar on her chin. She was doing so many things that she usually didn't care too much about. She was never the kind of girl to make a fuss about what she was wearing or if someone would see a little pimple or something on her face. But today was different for some reason. This was her first date with Jack and she wanted to look nice for it. That was more than normal, right? Lots of girls did this. But it was strange for herâ€| in a good way, she supposed.

In Hiccup's opinion, six came too quickly. It was almost like the time was four and then she blinked and two whole hours went by. When

the doorbell rang, she heard Toothless' nails clack against the hardwood floors and his barking begin to radiate throughout the house. She flew down the stairs after throwing on her brown fur coat and making sure she had her bag with her. Sure, her messenger bag was kind of big, but it just slung over her shoulder and it came in handy when she didn't feel like carrying smaller shopping bags around with her. Plusâ€¦ it had other necessities in it so it was easier to just take it everywhere with her instead of having to switch between bags all the time.

Hiccup gripped the Great Dane's red collar and opened the door to see Jack standing there with his hands behind his back. His usual blue hoodie was replaced with heavier black coat that went down to just above his knees. His breath became fog as he blushed and asked "Heyâ€¦ you ready to go?"

* * *

><p>I'm sorry I keep doing this to you guys but I love leaving my chapters off like this. They make me feel so powerful and evil. *insert evil laugh here* No, I'm not sorry at all.

16. Plaza Pleasantries

Hello, everyone~! Summer vacation's officially on for me and HTTYD 2 is almost upon us. Hopefully, these chapters will be going up faster now, but I'm just going to shut up and let you read Hiccup and Jack's first date. Hope you like it~! :)

* * *

><p>It was needless to say that Jack was anxious about tonight. It was his first date ever, after all, and he was terrified that it wouldn't go well. But that didn't stop him from dressing up a little and picking up something to set the mood before he came to pick his date up. He kept a lone rose hidden behind his back as he knocked on the door and heard the inevitable sound of Toothless barking his head off as a response. Even though he was outside in the cool air of winter, Jack could feel the house vibrating with every powerful roar that dog made as he came even closer to the front door.<p>

When the door opened, he saw Hiccup on the other side, doing her best to keep the dog inside but not being very successful "Hey." She greeted, almost grunting from trying to control her giant beast of a dog.

"Hey. Ready to go?" He asked before he was pummeled by her dog. Or, more precisely, pushed over and then got a pair of slobber-soaked hands when the canine smelled the rose behind his back. Maybe that was his stupid imagination, but Toothless was being a bit more welcoming to Jack since his last visit. It could just be he was getting used to seeing him in his territory, but Jack could leave his stupid fantasies to himself for now.

"Toothless!" Hiccup smiled up at Jack awkwardly "Just a sec." The tiny girl took the dog by the collar and dragged him inside with little difficulty. Once he was back inside the house, she kept the animal barricaded inside with one of her legs. Her face flashed with

shock, as if she just remembered something important, and she turned her head back and shouted "I'm going now, mom!"

Jack heard Val giggle in the background and practically sing "Okay, have fun Henrika!"

"Okay!" The small brunette responded before carefully closing the front door and re-focusing her attention to her date "Sorry, he's hard to control sometimes."

"He's a dog." Jack commented "They're like that."

Hiccup smiled in agreement and brushed her bangs out of her face "Can we go now?"

"Of course." The older teen beamed, trying his best to dry his hands a bit with the back of his shirt as Hiccup was clearly becoming curious about what he was hiding from her. When they were dry enough, Jack slowly slipped the flower into her view and held it out for her "I uhâ€¦ got this for you."

"Thank youâ€¦" Her voice hinted with surprise as she took the rose from his grasp and smiled at it with the softest expression he'd seen on her yet. It was full of adoration and happiness, almost like no one had ever given her a little flower before. But, for all he knew, no one ever had. She came out of her daze after a moment and flashed a metal smile at him "This is really nice."

"I'm glad you like it. Come on." He jogged down the steps and to his car while Hiccup followed. He went around to the passenger side door and opened it, gesturing inside as he looked back at his date "After you."

A little blush showed up on her cheeks and she looked away from him for a second "Since when did you have a gentlemanly side?" She playfully rebutted.

Jack leaned on the car door and smirked "You'll be surprised how many sides I have." Hiccup climbed inside and he shut the door behind her before trying (and failing) to slide across the hood of the car and getting in the driver's seat.

"Was that you showing off your smooth side or something?" The brunette joked.

"Eh, that side's not really on its game tonight." He replied as he backed out of the driveway "But a lot of others are."

"Ah."

For the first few minutes, the ride was quiet after that. But this wasn't just a five minute drive down to get ice cream; it was bound to get boring if they didn't get into a conversation or something "So," He started "uh, what's up Hiccup?"

"Not much." She replied "There wasn't a lot going on today at the house."

"Really? Not even with Toothless running around?"

"Besides him waking me up this morning, no." Jack heard a little giggle "What about you?"

"Eh," Jack turned onto another street "Ana had class this afternoon so I mostly just hung out with Emma."

"Your parents weren't around on a weekend?" Hiccup questioned.

"That's kind of the norm at my house." The taller teen explained "Mom does all the business stuff for a winter sports place on the other side of town. And she volunteers a lot."

"Do you ever go with her?"

"Sometimes, yeah." Jack made another turn.

"What about your dad?" The freckled girl wondered.

He quietly hissed "Dad's a bit more complicatedâ€¦ he's still around, don't worry about that, but, see, he's a technician and work has him traveling like all the time. He hasn't been home for maybeâ€¦ four months now?" Jack was even starting to question if that really was how long his dad had been gone. He honestly didn't remember exactly when his old man had left on his latest business trip.

"Do you know when he's coming home?"

"Yeah, he'll be home in two or three weeks."

"Where is he?"

Jack thought for a moment, trying to recall "Australia."

"Fun." Hiccup commented "The continent where everything wants to kill you."

"Pretty much." The older teen chuckled "But that is where I met my friend Eli, so it's got it's pros and cons."

"So you've been there?"

"Yeah, dad dragged the family around sometimes when my sisters and I were younger. Eli and I met there when we were, like, twelve, talked long distance for a few years, and then he practically begged his parents to let him go to high school here so he could 'expand his horizons' or however he put it. But, really, he just wanted to stop talking on the phone and get a chance to pull his senior prank with me." Jack laughed at the thought "It's gonna be the best one to ever hit the school." Hiccup laughed along with him.

Conversation died down some after that, but the two still made comments about things that they'd passed by or what they might want to do once they got to the plaza, which they were getting close to. Jack kept his eyes on the road, but stole a quick glance at Hiccup out of the corner of his eye. She just kept staring out the window or down at the rose he'd given her, fiddling with it in her hands. She looked nervousâ€¦ was this her first date ever too?

Jack pulled into an empty parking space close to the plaza "Here we

are." He stated as he put the car in park and turned it off. He turned to look at Hiccup and was taken aback by what he saw. Those grassy plains in her eyes were alight again, widened in an attempt to take in what was before them. The plaza was receiving a small dusting of snow and it was decked out with pure white Christmas lights on every street lamp and display window. Some snowflakes made out of the same lights were hanging from some of the branches on the trees nearby as well. Jack felt his mouth stretch into a smile as he stared at her without a bit of shame. He hadn't seen it that many times yet, but he loved every time he could catch Hiccup while she was looking at something with so much life in those eyes of hers.

"Wow." Hiccup gaped.

"I thought you said you've been here before?" Jack recalled, playfully smirking at her.

"I have." She confirmed; voice fragile as if she was afraid of breaking their surroundings by the sound of her voice "But never in the winter. It looks so pretty with all the lights set up."

"I know." The white-haired boy agreed "Wanna go see it up close?"

Hiccup's smile spread wider as she nodded and unbuckled her seatbelt, leaving the rose he gave her on the seat. She climbed out of the car and practically skipped to the sidewalk in front of Jack, who was close behind her. When he caught up with her, he took her hand into his, clicked the button on his car keys, and locked the car.

Hiccup glanced around quickly and asked "Where do you wanna go first?"

"Wherever you want." Jack answered.

* * *

><p>Hiccup couldn't help but smile at Jack's reply. This was already better than she hoped for. The place was beautiful; all of the lights everywhere were making the falling snow sparkle on its way down to the ground and the idea of the date in general was fun to her. She'd never thought of just wandering around window shopping and maybe grabbing a snack or two along the way. They may have been somewhere Hiccup didn't know well, but it was charming and busy enough to make the plaza feel alive but not overly crowded. And, best of all, Jack seemed like he was genuinely interested in seeing her and doing things that made her happy. It wasn't simple indifference or a lack of interest; Jack's remarks came across as questions asked out of lighthearted curiosity and a genuine desire to learn more about her. And the feeling emanating off of him made Hiccup's stomach flutter in the best way. It made the smile that she wore never want to disappear. And it stayed on her face as the evening progressed.<p>

After a minute or two of debating, she decided that she just wanted to circle around and see what they could find in the plaza. Jack followed her lead, never letting his hand untangle with hers as they wove through groups of people on the sidewalk. They passed an array of decorated window displays, all decked out with a little hint of holiday cheer as if the onlookers really needed another reminder of

what time of year it was. Normally, Hiccup didn't pay much attention to these displays. But they caught her attention that night for some reason, as if the fact that she was on a date made the assortments of treats, clothing, and decorations more pleasing to look at. At least they were also something to talk about if there was ever an awkward gap in their conversation.

What started out as harmless window shopping evolved into the couple slipping into every store that they passed and aimlessly wandering the aisles to see what was for sale. The first few stores that they explored mostly sold knick-knacks for the holiday season along with candies and different kinds of expensive popcorn with all different flavors and toppings added to them inside their tins. When they started wandering into clothing shops, though, they started to do more than browse. Hiccup started sifting through racks of sweaters without really thinking until Jack came behind her and asked "See anything you like?"

She turned her neck and saw that he was right behind her, his chin hovering a few inches above her shoulder. Wow, did he have a nice jaw line! "Uh, yeah, kinda." She sputtered "But, uh, there's no way I can afford these things. I mean, look at the prices." The sweater she was holding onto at the moment was priced at sixty-five dollars! The one she was wearing under her coat only cost about twentyâ€|. Maybe less. Hiccup was notorious for going directly to the clearance section whenever she went out looking to buy something.

"Who said we were gonna buy anything?" The taller teen retorted. The two exchanged a look and they seemed to get the same idea, splitting up into two separate directions to gather up clothes that they would try on just for the fun of it. They came back together in front of the changing rooms, in the back of the store, each with arms full of clothing. They each went behind a curtain and talked to each other while they switched out what they were wearing, only coming out to see the other when they were both dressed and ready to show off what they found.

For the most part, Hiccup stuck to the winter sweaters that she loved and different pairs of pants and leggings. But she threw the occasional dress and skirt into the pile just to see Jack's reactions. Her favorite had to be when she came out from behind the curtains wearing a long-sleeved gray dress that was pleated on the skirt and had black patches of cloth that looked like leaves sewn around the collar. He came out at the same time as her wearing a bomber jacket, a very warm-looking scarf, and a light gray beanie with his dark wash jeans. They both stared at each other for a moment before smiling and complimenting their date on how good they looked in those clothes.

This went on for a good hour or so before they ran out things to try on from their piles and decided that soon they'd be asked to either buy something or leave. And, since neither of them had the budget to buy anything in the storeâ€| they chose the latter.

* * *

><p>After they exited the clothing shop they were inside, Jack noticed a coffee shop a few door down from them. Good thing too, putting on his own private fashion show with Hiccup made him thirsty for something "Come on." He led her to the shop and a sign on the

glass door read Now serving: hot and ready hot chocolate. Perfect! "Want something to drink?"

Hiccup noticed the sign and her eyes widened a bit, a crooked-toothed smile appearing "Only if I can put marshmallows in mine."

They entered the building and ordered two cups of hot chocolate, with marshmallows please, and sat down at a table for two by the front window. They both shed their coats again and Jack got a better look at Hiccup's plain purple sweater. It was loose on her, like all of her clothing seemed to be, but he still thought it flattered her. Wow, did purple look good on her. Not as good as green did, but purple was definitely a close second.

Hiccup snagged some mini marshmallows out of their little plastic bag of them and dropped six into her cup, settling to eat the rest of her handful as they were. Jack took some of his own, tossing them into his mouth one at a time, and they were quiet again. It wasn't exactly uncomfortable; Hiccup was probably just pre-occupied with making her drink the way she liked it or something. But Jack still got a little anxious about it. He thought back to Anna's advice and remembered the game that she'd told him about. She told him that it's almost guaranteed to kill the silence if he needed it to, especially on the first few dates. He coughed to gain the brunette's attention "So, wanna play a game?"

"What kind of game?" She questioned.

"A Let's-Get-to-Know-Each-Other game." Jack popped another marshmallow into his mouth.

"How do we play?" Hiccup dipped her finger into her hot chocolate and quickly took it out, waving it off "Hot, hotâ€¦" she hissed.

"It's pretty easy." The white-haired teen admitted "But it's fun. We each take a turn asking the other something we've been wanting to know about them. We keep going until one of us runs out of questions or we ask something too personal."

"As in too personal period or too personal for a first date?"

"First date." Jack blew on his cocoa and took a sip, not minding the slight sting the heat caused his mouth "Sound good?" Hiccup nodded "Okay, then. You go first."

"Ummâ€¦" The freckled girl's eyes wandered around for a while, as if the walls had a list of questions that she could ask on them. Then again, she might have run out of questions after their conversation in the carâ€¦ No, there's no way she could only have a few things about him that she was curious about "how badly does my dad scare you?"

It took Jack a few seconds to register the question and, when he did, he got a little nervous "W-well, ya knowâ€¦ he's very, uhâ€¦ literate in weaponry, and he's the size of a freaking mountain." He tried to laugh it off but saw Hiccup start chewing her lip again, something she seemed to do when she got worried "Yeah, he scares me."

She sighed "I figured. I know he means well, but, gods, he's gotta find some limits. He just doesn't want anyone to think I'm, like,

vulnerable or anything. He thinks it's his job to protect me so he scares every guy who talks to me for longer than ten minutes."

"Well, he_ is_ your father." Her date pointed out "Protecting their kids is part of the job description, isn't it?"

"Yeah, I know. I just wish he'd trust me a little more, ya know?" He nodded at her complaint "Okay, your turn." Hiccup said before she took another sip of her hot chocolate.

"Okay, umâ€¦" Jack tapped his fingers against the tabletop, glancing around quickly before locking his eyes on her again "Why does everyone call you Hiccup? Ya know, besides your parents?"

"Wellâ€¦ this is kind of a stupid storyâ€¦" She leaned on the tabletop and cracked a small smile "My brother started calling me that when we were little. We used to butt heads a lot, like siblings do, andâ€¦" She looked to her side, a slight blush dusting onto her cheeks "I got the hiccups all the time when I was younger. And, most of the time, for no reason. So Scott would make fun of me by saying things like 'When ya gonna stop hiccupping, you little hiccup?' And, cause I was younger than him, I didn't really have a good comeback for awhile." Her smile grew again "When I was about three or four, I started calling him Snot Face because he was, well, a snot to me." Her gaze finally re-met Jack's "They're still a little inside joke between the two of us. I know, it's dumb and all butâ€¦ that's how it started."

Jack cocked his head to the side and his lips parted slightly in confusion "But what about your friends?"

"They call me Hiccup because I asked them to." She replied "I don't like my first name, plus Hiccup's easier to say than Henrika."

"What's wrong with Henrika?" The older teen curiously asked "I meanâ€¦ I never met another girl with that name before. It's more original than Jack, anyway. Come on, it's only the name of a bunch of dead guys in movies." He smirked.

Hiccup giggled at the comment before she shrugged "I don't know; I just don't like my name. It sounds like a boy's name, doesn't it?"

"Not really." He stated "I think it's kinda cute." He added with another sly grin. He saw hiccup blush a bit and he reclined in his chair "Your turn."

She took another sip with her free hand and pondered her next question "Umâ€¦ have you dated anyone before?"

Jack shook his head, white locks flopping into his face "No, never. No one ever reallyâ€¦ caught my eye until now." Hiccup blushed again "What about you? Have you dated before?" He downed more of his hot chocolate.

Hiccup seemed to get tense after he asked her that. He was worried she wouldn't answer him, but she did "Yeah, I have."

"Oh, really?" Jack leaned forward in his seat again, his smirk growing "And what number am I?" He wondered playfully.

"Uh, three." She responded, adding after a bit of thought "But one of them hardly counts cause it didn't go anywhere" so, I'd say you're only number two."

Okay, she looked kind of uncomfortable talking about this "Look, you don't have to tell me now if you don't want to. You asked first so I just-

"Got curious." The brunette finished "I know, it's okay. But I'd rather not tell you about that adventure on the first date."

The taller teen nodded "I get it." They were quiet for a minute before he piped up again "So, does that mean we're going on another date?"

Hiccup chuckled "I thought the game stopped once we got too personal?"

"Come on, humor me."

She shrugged "I'd say the odds are in your favor."

* * *

><p>It was nine-thirty when Jack brought Hiccup back home. He walked her up to the front door again and they hugged each other good-bye. Hiccup told him that she'd had a great time and would definitely like to see him again sometime. He agreed and, when they started to separate, Jack planted a quick kiss on her freckled cheek. She said another flustered good-bye before she went inside the house and left him outside on the porch, probably to spare him another visit with her dad. He couldn't say that he was disappointed by that.<p>

Then, he got back in his car and drove home with a stupid smile on his face. He half-expected to come home to find everyone in their respective bedrooms, since it was a little after ten by the time he finally got in the front door. But he was mistaken.

"Jack~!" Emma sang as she hopped off the couch and ran towards her brother, spreading her arms wide as he crouched down to pull her into a hug "How was your date, huh? How'd it go? Are you gonna go out again?"

Jack couldn't help but laugh at his little sister's eagerness "Hey, slow down, slow down. Stop talking for a minute so I can tell you." They separated and Emma started bouncing on the balls of her feet with a goofy grin on her face "I think it went really well; we had a lot of fun together. And~" He paused for dramatic effect "we are going out again." Emma squealed, though it was obvious she was trying to keep quiet in case Jack had more to say. "We just don't know when yet; we gotta figure that part out."

Emma hugged him again "Good."

"Why do you suddenly care so much about this, huh Squirt?"

"Because it looks like she makes you happy, Jack." The small brunette

answered with a hum "I like seeing you like this."

Jack gently pulled himself out of her arms to walk over to the couch. Emma happily took a seat next to him "Hey, it's not like I was never happy before this or anything."

"I know." His sister shrugged "But still."

It was quiet for a moment before Jack heard his mother talking to someone upstairs. But he didn't hear any replies between her pauses "Who's Mom talking to?"

"Oh, I forgot!" Emma exclaimed "Dad's on the phone with her."

"Really?"

"Yeah! He wanted to talk to you but Mom said you were on a date. And~ I bet now he wants to talk to you even more."

"Okay, Squirt." He ruffled her hair as he stood and headed for the stairs "I'll go check on that."

Jack ascended the stairs and noticed Anna in her room when he started to swing the corner. She noticed him and looked at him expectantly, her pet bird sitting calmly on her shoulder. He simply gave her a thumbs up and a smile, to which she smiled back and quietly applauded, before he moved on down the hall to the master bedroom. The door was slightly ajar and he could hear his mother's chatting more clearly, though it was nothing very notable; just what's been going on at her work.

Jack knocked before entering and her chatter immediately stopped to see who it was. She beamed when she saw her son "Char, Jack just got home. Do you still wanna talk to him?" She put her hand over the receiver and whispered "Your father."

Jack mouthed back "Emma told me."

Mary's attention was regained by her husband's voice on the other end "Yeah, of course. Okay, here he is." She handed the cordless phone to Jack before walking out of the room, probably to give the two some privacy.

"Hey, Dad." He greeted.

"Hey there, Jack." Charles Overland responded "How'd your date go, huh?"

"It went great." He sat down on the edge of the bed and smiled "We agreed to go out again sometime."

"Good for you. So, what's her name?"

Jack just smiled "Henrika."

"Henrika?" His father repeated "Don't think I've heard that one before."

"Neither have I. She's, uh, she's as different as her name

anyway."

"I bet."

"So, what's up-?"

"Actually, Jack, I have to get going. There's something important I've been putting off that needs to get done." Charles interrupted "But I had to hear how my son's first date went. I'll call on Christmas and we can catch up then, okay?"

His son exhaled "Yeah, okay."

"Good luck with Henrika. You'll let me meet her sometime, right?"

Jack laughed "Yeah, sure Dad."

"Alright, I'll talk to you later."

"Bye." He hung up and stared down at the phone for a moment. Another phone call cut short, just like always. Oh well, he'd be home soon anyway. Jack left the phone on the bed and went back down the hall, going into his room and shutting the door behind him. He let out a sigh as he fell on his bed, laughing a bit when the mattress squeaked a little under his weight. A great date with Hiccup, a call from Dad—he couldn't have asked for a better night.

17. Christmas-time Conversations

****Hello everyone, I'm back~! *Insert usual "I'm sorry I'm late" speech****

****So, this chapter's kinda fillery and more of a bridge to the next chapter so... yeah, I hope you like it, anyway. ****

*** * ***

><p>Christmas break for Hiccup always meant that she was going to be busy, be it with family or friends or both at the same time. It was everyone she cared about coming from wherever they were and gathering in one place to celebrate together. It meant being able to stay up late and wake up whenever she wanted. But this break in particular was turning out to be more hectic than normal. Since her date with Jack kicked it off, she hadn't had that many days yet where she could just relax and do nothing. Instead the weekend was spent doing homework that she'd been assigned to do over the vacation and helping her parents put up the last of the Christmas decorations. Then the weekdays came and she had something planned for almost every one of them.<p>

A few days after her first date with Jack, Hiccup was hanging out at the Hoffersons' for the day and, surprisingly, both of the blonde-haired twins were interested in hearing about how her outing with the "tall, pale, and handsome Jack Overland" as Astrid described him. So she recanted the entire date to the two of them, giving the sisters details as they asked for them and, eventually, just getting the idea and putting them in herself. And the whole time her friends were happy with what they were hearing.

Astrid, as always, was more interested in the brunette's romantic endeavors than Cam but that didn't stop the messier twin from asking questions and making her own commentary. Most of it had to do with who paid for the hot chocolate and stuff like that, being the feminist that she was. But it was more out of curiosity than anything. Hiccup guessed that she wanted to try to figure out what kind of guy Jack was based off of certain things that he and Hiccup did when they went out. She got stuck between "The Guy Who Insists on Paying to be a Gentleman" and "The Guy who actually has a Sense of Equality." Well, at least those guesses were better predictions than the ones she had last time.

It didn't take very long for Bertha to make herself known to the three teenagers either. She slipped into the room and started leaving her own input after a little while. She'd apparently been listening the whole time and just decided to stay at bay; however, some of the stuff Hiccup and Jack did were apparently too cute for her to handle in silence. So, that was basically her entire Tuesday. Well, that and playing video games with the Hofferson sisters until Val came to pick her up that night.

The next day she was hanging out with Clueless, as he'd come home from his school for the holiday as well, and catching up with him one-on-one. The next was dragging Scott out to town with her to help pick up the last-minute gifts that the family had been neglecting to get and some ingredients for the meal that Stefan had been planning to make for the big day. Val mentioned that she could help him with it several times but her husband was set on keeping her as far away from the kitchen as possible. The only really nice way that he could put it was that he didn't marry Val for her cooking skills. The day after that was cleaning the house from top to bottom and preparing her room to be taken over by her grandfather for the next week. Hiccup wasn't much of a fan of the idea, but the man drove a long way each time he came to visit and her parents insist that each drive up should be worth it for him. Plus, Scott's room was too messy for anyone except him to feel comfortable living in. All she could say on the matter was that Old Wrinkly was lucky that she loved him; as if the nickname didn't give that away.

Before Hiccup knew it, the weekend had swung back around. But she realized it had when she woke up at noon that Saturday; on her own, for a change. Her eyes creaked open and she didn't see Toothless laying on the floor, so she assumed that he was downstairs somewhere. The dog was probably watching her father cooking, hoping that he'd be tossed a free sample. And, without him to pull her out of bed, Hiccup just opted to lay there under the blankets for a while longer, thinking about nothing in particular. Although, Jack came up quite a few times in her random array of thoughts, as if that was a surprise to her anymore.

When she heard the doorbell ring was when she finally decided to get out from under the covers, as Toothless' barking upon hearing the sound surely woke her up along with the rest of the neighborhood. Hiccup heard her father's heavy footsteps downstairs and the front door opening. She expected to hear him yelling at Toothless to get back and apologize to whoever was outside for the Great Dane's behavior. But it never came. Toothless' lack of barking after a moment and the jovial conversation that was starting downstairs got her curious. So she got up from her bed and wandered closer to the

staircase, staying out of sight just in case she wanted to avoid whoever was at the door. Christmas of course meant family and friends everywhere but, when it came to certain members, Hiccup needed some time to prepare herself for interacting with them.

"It's good to see you made it in one piece again." Stefan joked.

"Eh, getting here's never a problem." A familiar raspy wondered somewhere down the hall "Now where are my grandchildren?"

"Scott should be home any minute now; I sent him out to go get a few things I forgot." Hiccup heard her father respond "Henrika should be upstairs- Henrika!" Of course he didn't know she was waiting near the top of the stairs for everyone to calm down a bit.

"Dad!" Val called "Hi!"

"There's my girl." Hiccup's grandfather cheered "How are ya, Val?"

"I'm great, Dad. What else would you expect?"

"I don't know, maybe some exciting development to come out of it?" He chuckled and Hiccup could hear him give her mother a kiss on the cheek. A smirk came onto Hiccup's face as she listened to the three of them.

"Henrika!" Her father shouted, even louder than the last time.

She rolled her eyes and decided that she'd been eavesdropping long enough. She stood and descended the stairs to see her parents standing by the front door with the ever-familiar old man with a peppered gray mustache and beard holding his cane "Hey, Grandpa." Hiccup greeted. She held back on the nickname since Stefan thought it was a little disrespectful to call your grandfather old and wrinkly, even if said grandfather found it amusing and laughed along with her. So it'd gone from the name her toddler-self called him to their own personal joke, a lot like hers and Scott's silly nicknames.

"Come here, you little hiccup." He ordered before pulling her into a hug. Hiccup could smell the tobacco from his pipe on his breath and his beard tickled the side of her face a little "How are you? How's school going?"

"Pretty good." Hiccup answered as she pulled away from him, smiling.

"Oh, yeah?" The old man asked "Anything new happening around here or do I have to wait for Scott to give me all the updates?"

"Well-" Stefan started.

He was cut off by his wife "Henrika actually does have a bit of news." She looked at her daughter expectantly.

"Oh, yeah?" The youngest Haddock less than enthusiastically replied "I, uh, I went on a date last weekend. And, uh, we're talking about going out again soon."

Her grandfather suddenly became intrigued by the update "Really now?" She nodded in response "So who's the lucky guy, huh? Gimme a name."

"Uh, Jack." She blushed a bit upon saying his name "Hi-his name's Jack."

"Got a picture on ya?" He went on "I gotta see if he's half as good looking as I was at your age." He laughed and let out a wave of breath that reeked of pipe smoke.

"How about you unpack first, Dad?" Val suggested "Get settled and then we can all catch up, okay?"

"Works for me." Old Wrinkly claimed as he began to scale the stairs.

"Henrika, why don't you help your grandfather upstairs?" Stefan suggested.

"Oh, it's fine. I got it." Old Wrinkly insisted "But our little hiccup might need a few things before I kick her out for the week?" He looked at her from over his shoulder and smirked before he continued to climb the stairs.

Hiccup looked down at herself and finally remembered that she was still in her flannel pajamas and probably had a bad case of bed-head "Rightâ€|"

* * *

><p>It was three days before Christmas and Jack and Emma were taking the day to partake in their favorite seasonal tradition: the ever-important Christmas cookie baking. The Overlands have been their family's cookie provider since Jack was in kindergarten, the first year that they finally stopped following Charles around for work. It had always been a fun activity for him to do and, now that he had basically dubbed himself the family baker, Jack was making all of the cookies that he used to simply decorate from scratch. Well, except for the gingerbread men. Those were still done with a family recipe that goes back a few generations that, frankly, was too good to even think about changing.<p>

The two siblings were decorating a batch of Jack's Christmas tree-shaped cookies with all different colors of frosting; Jack much more expertly than Emma. In the background, a stereo in the dining room was blasting a CD of Christmas carols to help keep the mood.

The two had fallen silent for some time before Emma finally broke it "Are ya gonna give some to Henrika?"

"I would, but I have to find out if she can eat them first." Her brother clarified.

"How come? Does she have allergies or something?"

"No. Uh, I don't think so, anywayâ€|" He trailed off "but she has braces. And I know there's a lot of things you can't eat when you have braces on."

The young girl laughed "Ask Anna about it."

Jack joined in on the laughter "Maybe I will when she gets home."

Emma huffed when she squirted out more frosting than she intended to "Where'd she go anyway? It's not like she has school or anything."

"Yeah, but that doesn't mean she can't go hang out with her friends right?"

"I just wish she was here making the cookies with us." Emma explained "Like we always do, remember?"

"I remember." Jack mused "I hate to say it, Em, but you coming along is the thing that made this family more normal."

The brunette stuck out her tongue and her older brother did the same, leading to the two sharing a good laugh before the timer went out, signaling that the latest batch of cookies was done.

Jack slid on the oven mitts and pulled out a tray full of gingerbread men and transferred them onto a cooling rack before resting the tray on the stove "Alright, they look good." He looked back at his sister "You got the next batch punched out, right?"

The small girl nodded and pointed to a tray of unbaked gingerbread men "There's still more dough too."

He looked over the shapes on the tray and then to the unused dough sitting on the cutting board with all of the cookie cut-out molds "Hmmâ€¦ I think we can squeeze a few more on that tray, Emma."

"Okay!" She moved from the decorating station they'd made to the baking station farther down the counter and climbed on the barstool that was placed there for her to sit on. Then, she started rolling out the remainder of the dough "How many do you think we can get out of this little bit?"

"Maybe three or four." Her brother guessed "I just hate wasting the dough, so we might as well get as much as we can out of this." He moved the shapes already on the pan closer together and made room for more cookies while Emma flattened the dough and cut out as many shapes as she could. After she took the leftovers and milked it as much as she could, the siblings had another four cookies to decorate. And, once they were all placed gingerly with the rest of the cookies, Jack took the pan, slid it into the oven, and set the timer.

The rest of the afternoon and some of the evening went like this, with the two of them preparing and decorating their festive treats while they waited for others to bake and cool. Jack's life might not have always been this domestic, but he surely enjoyed it more than traveling all over the place and not having any roots at all. And, though he sometimes ignored her, Emma was what brought this lifestyle to him and Anna. So he loved spending time with her in this way, relishing in the simple pleasures that he was allowed to enjoy because of her. It was one of his favorite parts of Christmas;

remembering how important his family is.

* * *

><p>Before Hiccup knew it, Christmas day had come and that meant that there would be almost no rest until all but those who were sleeping at her house were gone. There were still presents that needed to be wrapped, dishes that had to be prepared, decorations to be adjusted and tweaked, and, most importantly, Hiccup had to move everything that she'd moved downstairs for her past few nights of sleeping on the couch back into her bedroom so that the living room looked presentable again. On top of it all, Toothless was constantly getting in the way because he didn't want to miss a bit of the excitement either, be it a scrap of food or Scott getting his foot caught on something and spilling a giant pile of presents all over the floor.<p>

And, of course, before the few remaining members of the family arrived for the evening, the Haddocks had to put on their best holiday attire. And, while Val decided to wear a nice-looking dress colored a festive green, the rest of them just changed into nicer tops and pants that didn't have dirt or stains on them. Stefan actually convinced Scott to put on a button down while he donned the same sweater that he wore every Christmas and Old Wrinkly avoided changing all-together by complaining about how difficult it was for him to do so (the lying bastard). Meanwhile, Hiccup threw on a dark green sweater that she liked and dark-wash jeans. She was only going to see about eight people in total so why go all out, right?

The first person to show up was Stefan's best friend Gobber. Well, his name isn't Gobber but everyone's called him that since the two met in college. Apparently the man was impossible to shut up after he's had a few drinks and the nickname stemmed from there. He wobbled inside decked out in the mostâ€| interesting Christmas outfit that Hiccup had ever seen, jovially waving his prosthetic hand in the air as a greeting. He had fake antlers on his head that light up with red and green lights and a sweater with the same setup. The lights were joined by strings of garland and sloppily-done crocheted images of trees, snowflakes, and gingerbread men adorning his top. In his hand he had a bottle of wine and left it with the other bottles sitting on the dining room table.

Not very long after that, Hiccup's Uncle Spencer arrived. He only comes around for the holiday and then disappears again until next year, mostly because he and Stefan have more bad blood between them than a sibling rivalry. But the brothers managed to be civil on the one time a year that they met. Hiccup always found it strange that Scott looked more like their uncle than their father, but it wasn't like she was a carbon copy either. So they just left it at that.

And, in general, the party was pretty boring. Once Spencer arrived, everyone was there and people started filing into their usual roles. Stefan and Gobber took to the kitchen to finish off the last few touches on dinner, Old Wrinkly stepped outside to smoke his pipe until the meal actually came out, and Hiccup and Scott retreated into the living room to occupy themselves with a video game or two. They wound up putting in their favorite fighting game and going at each other in a thirteen-round tournament where the first one to seven victories was the winner.

About halfway through the matches, Hiccup moaned as Scott's avatar tore the head off of hers, ending the round "Come on, you _so_ cheated!"

"No I'm not; this is skill." The older Haddock defended "Look, you see what this is?" He held up two fingers "The rounds left that I have to win. And you know what this is?" He put up two more "The number of chances I have."

"And do you know what this is?" The brunette made a small circle with her thumb and index finger "The size of your brain. Waitâ€|" She made the circle smaller "There. That's more like it."

Scott growled "You are so going down, little sister."

"I'd like to see you try, bro."

And Scott did win, but just barely. They had each won six matches and their final battle decided the winner. When the timer ran out, Scott's avatar had just a little more health than Hiccup's did and he proceeded to boast about it with a stupid cheer before dinner was called.

The food was all great, as usual, but there was also the usual amount of conversation: none. So the freckled teen had been searching for an excuse to leave the table when her cell phone rang. She took it out of her pocket and saw Jack's name showing on the screen. Everyone looked at her when her generic ringtone sounded and she felt her ears heat up.

"Oh, I gotta take this." Hiccup stated as she excused herself from the table. She picked it up when she was a decent distance away from her family "Hey." She greeted.

"Hey." Jack answered "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas, Jack." Hiccup repeated "What's up? How's your day been going so far?"

"Well, since I finally figured out how to get this freaking Play Station to work on my TV," he sighed like he'd just sat down "pretty good."

Hiccup started scaling the stairs to go up to her bedroom "Got it today, I take it?"

"Yeah. Present from my parents. They got me a good six games to go with it too."

"Ooh~, fancy."

"I know!" The older teen cheered "Maybe you can come hang out here sometime and we can play together?"

The brunette chuckled "Sounds fun. Especially since I haven't seen your house yet while you've been over hereâ€| how many times now? Seven? Eight? Kinda unfair, don't ya think?"

"Maybe just a little." Jack teased "What about you? You get anything

cool today?"

"Eh, not really. Some gift cards, a bunch of new fantasy books, some clothes" she peeked through Scott's door just out of curiosity "and a new laptop." She knew Jack couldn't see it, but she smirked anyway.

"Really? Awesome!" He exclaimed.

"Yeah, hopefully this one'll last longer than two years."

"Take tech upgrades when you can; they don't come along very often because of their price tags."

"I know, believe me." Hiccup jiggled the handle to her bedroom door and groaned when it wouldn't open "Stupid door!" She shouted as she gave a few sharp kicks and it finally opened "Sorry, my door's a pain."

"It's fine." Jack assured her "I'm not calling at a bad time, am I?"

Hiccup left her door ajar and sat on her bed "No, you've got perfect timing, actually."

"Avoiding the family, I take it?"

"Gods, you have no idea." Hiccup muttered "There's only like eight people in my family, my dad and my uncle hate each other for whatever reason, I don't have cousins to talk to either, so it's not exactly fun to be around them."

"Yeesh. Wouldn't you be in for a shock if you were over here."

"Hmm?"

"My dad might not be home yet, but that doesn't stop the rest of the family from coming over. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. I swear, we'll be out of food by the time everyone leaves."

Hiccup giggled at the remark "You're free to take some of our leftovers; we'll have plenty of 'em for sure."

"Thanks for the offer" Jack sniggered before excitement filled his voice "Oh, so I know you said you wanted to go out again and, well, I was wondering" maybe we could talk about what we might wanna do next time?"

"Hmm" The brunette pondered "How about I go to your house?"

"You're not gonna let that go, are you?"

She shook her head "Nope."

"I figured." He trailed off for a second "Alright, I'll see what I can do. It'll have to wait until sometime after my dad's home, though."

"Why?" She questioned.

"Because he's been pretty adamant about meeting you, so this'll knock out two birds with one stone."

"He won't try to show me how the Pear of Anguish works, will he?" Hiccup joked.

Jack let out a laugh of his own "I don't think so; he doesn't own one."

"Okay, I can relax a bit then."

"Hopefully, yes."

They stayed silent for a few minutes after that, content just listening to the other breathe, before Hiccup came back to reality "Oh, uh, I'd better go. Family's probably wondering where I am."

There were two smaller voices in the background on Jack's end, trying to get his attention "Yep, I've been found out too. Soâ€¦ talk to you soon?"

"Definitely."

"Night, Hiccup."

"Good night, Jack." Hiccup smiled as she hung up.

"Talkin' to your boyfriend, little hiccup?" She jumped and spun around, letting out a sigh of relief when she saw that it was just Old Wrinkly.

"Uh, yeah." She let her arms fall to her sides, her left hand holding her phone limply.

"Don't worry none; I won't tease ya or nothing your brother might do." He stated on his way to sit next to her on her bed. Or, for the week, his bed "After all, finding someone's about as natural as it can get, right?"

"I guessâ€¦" It was quiet again before she spoke up "so, do you still wanna see that picture of him?"

The old man smiled so widely she thought his jaw would fall off "Of course; lemme see."

Hiccup sat down next to him and scrolled through the pictures on her phone until she came across one of the only pictures of Jack she had on her. It was one that she took with him when they were in their first date, before they left the coffee shop that night. Hiccup liked having pictures of her with the people in her contacts list so that their faces would show up when they called her. And, since she and Jack never really could take selfies with just the two of them in it, it seemed like a good time. It was just a quick shot of the two of them standing next to each other and smiling at the camera lens.

Old Wrinkly leaned over and peeked at this image over her shoulder "That's him, hm?"

"Yeah."

He was silent, probably looking Jack over "He dyes his hair?"

"Yep. He told me his hair's naturally brown."

"He's got big ears too."

"Are you just gonna sit here and talk about these little things now?"

He ruffled her hair "Nah, just messing with you. He looks like a nice kid. Good things will come from him."

"Another prediction of yours?"

"Perhaps. Or maybe I'm just too much of a romantic." He stood and made his way for the door, stopping under the frame to turn back to his granddaughter "This, however" he pointed to the door frame "is a prediction. If you don't get your lazy ass brother or father to fix this for ye, something bad's gonna happen."

"It's not that bad."

"Henrika, this is a fire hazard, and earthquake hazard, and just about every other hazard I can think of." Her grandfather bluntly stated "What if you had to get out of your room and the door won't open? What'll happen then?"

She rolled her eyes "I think you're over-exaggerating, but I see the point. I'll ask Dad to do it after the holidays are over."

"Good girl." He praised "Now come on back downstairs, dessert's being taken out."

Hiccup followed her grandfather back to the party and waited until the adults had drunk enough eggnog for her to sneak back upstairs with Scott and Old Wrinkly and finally have some fun that night. Yep, it was Christmas classics and endless sweets until they all felt like they were going to pass out, just like the people drinking on the first floor.

18. Overland Onslaught

****HI I'M NOT DEAD!** My excuses for taking basically four months to update this: I got lazy and then college got a hold of me and I finally got myself motivated enough to write this after I turned in all of the papers I had due lately. I'm sorry guys, especially if I made anyone think I dropped the fic or anything like that. I promise I won't do that, I've just got a lot going on and I don't always want to spend my free time between writing papers by writing even more...

****But thank you for sticking with this story through that unexpected hiatus. I promise I'm doing the best that I can without stressing myself out. ****

* * *

><p>Today's the day. Jack kept telling himself as he and Emma stared out the window closest to the driveway _Dad comes home today.

It felt like forever since Jack had seen his dad in person. Sure, they Skyped about once a month or so and they talked on the phone quite often, but nothing could really compare to having the man right in front of him, prone to the playful nudges and shoves that his son would give when one of his jokes deserved it. It might have sounded weird to some people, but Jack needed to be able to touch those he was close with or else a feeling of loneliness would overcome him. If he didn't get a hug or pat on the shoulder or a high five or _something_ from those he cared about, especially his family, it would make him feel less connected to them somehow. Needless to say that Charles Overland had a _lot_ of physical contact to make up for after being gone for so long.

Jack sighed at the thought and let his head rest upon his folded arms. He glanced over at his younger sister, who was in almost the exact same position that he was with her arms resting on the back of the sofa. But the older sibling only diverted his attention from the driveway for a few seconds before sharp blue eyes darted back out the window. He wanted to know _exactly_ when his father was finally going to be back home again.

"Hey, Jackâ€|" Emma's voice quietly called out.

Her brother looked her way again "What's up, Em?"

The small girl rested her chin on her arms and exhaled "Are there any of our cookies left for Dad to try?"

The older Overland smirked at the younger "Of course there are; I think you and I made sure of that, right?"

Emma cracked her own smile "Yeah, we did." She paused and sighed "I just wanna hear what he thinks of them. I think they turned out _really_ good this year."

"Of course they did." Jack assured "I had you helping me, didn't I?"

His sister giggled in response and then silence fell over the two of them once more. Not an awkward, uncomfortable silence but a peaceful one. A quiet that was welcome and comfortable to the both of them as they sat in place, expectant eyes trained on the black pavement lined by mounds of dirty snow and dotted with patches of ice.

Maybe this long trip would finally be the last one. Maybe this time their father would really be home for good. Maybe they could fall into the schedule Hiccup seemed to have with her parents, where they both have some system of set work hours and she and her brother could expect them home around a certain time. It was something that Jack had longed for most of his life but never got to have because of his parents' schedules. Dad went off on long business trips like these and Mom, while having a demanding work agenda, volunteered at a local orphanage as much as she could and was also in no particular routine.

It was almost weird how something that was so mundane to the average person, being stuck in a routine, was something that Jack wanted more than anything in his adult life. He didn't want to become a robot or anything of the sort, but he did want to be able to tell his own family when to expect him home, that he'd be home for dinner every night or to tuck his own kids into bed in the future. He didn't want to leave a family of his own wondering when he would be coming back or how long he would be with them before he took off again.

Jack's thoughts trailed farther into his little fantasy and, before he knew it, he was imagining Hiccup being that person that he was coming home to, from whatever this daydream version of himself did for a living. She was the one to be waiting for him on the other side of the door and smile when she saw him, the one to greet him with a simple gesture like a peck on the cheek. The idea of it made heat pool in Jack's stomach and all of his muscles relax. The thought of someday living together, of them being able to come home and find the other there waiting for them and be happy to see them after even the worst days, sounded pretty good to Jack.

Despite his little daydream, it felt like forever before both the brunets perked up again, seeing a silver car pulling into the driveway and parking. That was him. Jack blinked, almost in shock, and backed away from the window "He's home!" A smile beamed across his face and he repeated louder "He's home!"

Emma had sprung up a few seconds after her brother and smiled up at him and giggled "Where's Anna?" She wondered, quickly glancing around to try to spot their big sister.

"She said she wanted to do some homework before Dad got home." He hastily explained before turning around and shouting towards the stairs "Anna! Dad's home!"

The oldest Overland squeaked, like she did when she dropped something, and called back "I'll be right down!"

They heard the front door open and quieted down, listening intently until they heard a gruff sigh and the door shutting behind it "Hello?" A very familiar voice beckoned out "Anyone home?" Jack and Emma grinned to each other devilishly and stayed silent "What? No welcoming committee this time?"

Then, the two of them decided their game had been put on long enough and ran towards the landing, yelling "Dad!" as they tackled the taller man into a long-awaited embrace.

Charles hugged them back and chuckled "Hey there, kiddos."

"Dad!" Anna's voice sounded as she practically flew down the stairs and joined the group hug "Oh gosh, we've missed you!"

Jack beamed up at his father "How was the flight?"

"Well, I was next to some guy who just slept the whole time, so it was quiet, at least." Their father claimed "Except when he started snoring; that got kinda annoying." He paused and put a hand on Emma's head to stroke her hair "Where's your mother?"

"She's at work, I think?" Anna bit her lip as she thought about

her final answer "Yeah, yeah, work."

"Guess she's in for a surprise when she comes home, then-"

Charles was cut off mid-sentence and Jack looked up over his shoulder to see why. Mary was behind them, with one hand on each side of her husband's neck as she smirked "I think you're the one who got a surprise this time, Char."

The older man let go of Jack and the girls and turned around to wrap his arms around his wife, grinning as widely as he could manage as he held her close "God, I've missed you."

Mary giggled "So have we." She pulled away and smiled at him "Welcome home."

He quickly leaned in and kissed her before he let go and grabbed hold of the suitcase he'd dropped by the doorway when he walked in "You have no idea how glad I am to be back here. Finally, I can relax a bit."

"Oh, oh!" Emma bounced on her feet and beamed up at her dad "Jack and I made cookies! Do you want any?"

Charles just ruffled her hair and chuckled some more "Maybe in a bit, Squirt. I wanna unpack and, uh," his attention turned to his son "I believe Jack has something he needs to give me more details on now that I'm back?"

Jack cleared his throat and shoved his hands into his pockets "Right, yeah, thatâ€¦"

Anna started climbing the stairs again before Charles called out "Oh, and Anna!" She stopped and looked over her shoulder "When I'm done with your brother, I wanna hear about how my college girl's doin' okay?"

A glittering smile flashed "Of course!" She squeaked before going back upstairs, no doubt to complete the homework she had been interrupted from.

Jack followed his father to the second floor of the house and into the master bedroom, where the suitcase was lazily tossed onto the mattress and its owner stretched. When the older man looked his way again, Jack couldn't help but hug him again, resting his chin on his father's shoulder "I really missed you, Dad."

"I've missed you to, son."

They separated and Jack noted that he was only a few inches shorter than his father now, having grown a bit since he'd been away. It was kind of a great feeling, since the whole family has commented on the pair's similarities since Jack was born. He guessed he really was growing up to be his father's son.

Charles ruffled his son's hair and the two shared a laugh as Jack fixed it again "Now when do I get to meet Miss Henrika, hm?"

"I invited her to come over Saturday and, since Mom insisted, she's staying for dinner." Jack stated "And, uh, she prefers being called

her nickname: Hiccup." He quickly added.

"Hiccup?" His father questioned. Jack nodded in confirmation and he silently laughed "I hope she's as cute as that nickname."

"Oh, she is." Jack bragged "Trust me."

Charles smugly grinned down at his son "I'll have to pull out the baby pictures then. See if those big ears you had can compete."

He laughed and Jack playfully punched him in the arm "Don't you dare."

His father shoved back "What? You grew into them, didn't you?"

* * *

><p>The week following Christmas was one more for relaxation than celebration at the Haddock household. So, after Old Wrinkly left to go back home, the family of four was finally able to come down from the rollercoaster that was the holidays. New Year's wasn't too important. Why should everyone gather just to watch a ball drop at midnight, right? The days passed by with Hiccup and Scott each locked in their rooms (or the garage, in Scott's case) and enjoying their Christmas presents; the younger glued to her new laptop and the older endlessly breaking in his new weight setâ€| once he managed to put it together.<p>

Yet, they found themselves coming together one particular day, seeing their parents had both gone out for the day, and got to do things they've been wanting to for months. Scott put Netflix up on the TV and they were going to marathon a bunch of movies. Most of them had, uhâ€| content that parents wouldn't approve of their kids watching, no matter how old they were. But, hey, what they don't know about won't hurt them.

The younger Haddock heard her brother shout from upstairs that she should get them some snacks, so she lazily got up and trudged into the kitchen with Toothless close behind her. Hiccup popped some popcorn in the microwave for her brother and got herself string cheese. Thenâ€| she came back to the living room to find her shirtless older brother bending behind the television to plug in the Wii again.

Hiccup just rolled her eyes in response to the sight "Ya know, the least you could do is put on a shirt. It's the middle of winter."

"Why?" He grunted. He plugged in the wires and stood upright, gesturing to his pecs "Do my nipples offend you, Princess?"

"Actually yeah, they do."

"Just pretend I'm Jack and everyone's problems'll be solved."

"Uh, how about no?"

"You're right." Scott sniggered "There's not enough of _this_ to go around."

"Oh, there's enough of it." Hiccup plopped down on the couch, casually pushing Toothless' giant head away from the popcorn bowl again and again "Maybe a bit too much, if you ask me."

"Ha, ha." He tossed the console's remote for her to catch "Very funny."

"I try my best, Snot Face." Scott joined her on the couch and grabbed his popcorn, swatting Toothless' head away before he took a big mouthful and chewed it with his mouth open "You're disgusting."

"Just play the first one in the queue." He ordered, spewing a few bits of popcorn as he spoke.

"Yeah, yeah." She decided to ignore her brother's eating habits and just go to the first movie lined up in his queue. She read the title and it was in French "Why do you have a foreign movie in here?"

"Just turn on the subtitles." Thank the gods, he swallowed "It's one of the funniest things you'll ever watch, trust me." Hiccup followed his instructions and absently nodded as she turned on English subtitles "So, uhâ€¦ what's going on with you and Jack?"

It took her a minute to process what he'd just asked her. But nonetheless she turned to him, eyebrows raised in surprise "Huh?"

"Ya know, likeâ€¦" It looked like he was struggling with what he wanted to ask her "Are you guys a, uh, a thing now?"

Hiccup thought about it for a moment before answering. She and Jack were still interested in seeing each other, but it didn't seem like Scott was even vaguely interested until now. It looked like he hated Jack. But maybeâ€¦ "Yeah, you can say that." She couldn't help the little smile that slipped onto her face after she said that.

"And you're cool with that?"

The brunette nodded "Don't worry about it. I'm meeting his family this weekend; that's a good sign."

Her brother looked away "I'm not worriedâ€¦"

"Whatever you say, bro." She pressed the play button "Whatever you say."

* * *

><p>The ride to get Hiccup and take her back home house was quiet. The kind of awkward quiet that Jack hated. He fidgeted a bit as he worked the steering wheel of his car, trying to hope that his family wouldn't royally embarrass him in front of Hiccup. He knew they meant well butâ€¦ he really didn't want her first visit to be marked by stupid childhood stories of him or baby pictures or anything of the sort.

He was only comforted in the slightest when he glanced over at his

girlfriend (That was what she was now, right?) and saw that she looked about as nervous as he felt. He hoped she wasn't stressing over them liking her. It was Hiccup, who couldn't like her?! She had nothing to worry about. Jack on the other hand—he knew his family and what they were capable of; he'd learned from watching and taking part in the chaos whenever Anna brought a guy to the house, even if he was just a friend.

Jack pulled into the driveway and took a breath before turning off the car and taking his keys. He walked Hiccup up to the front door and then paused. He looked down at her and took her hand gently "Look, I just thought I should warn you that they're uh—they're really excited to meet you. They tend to be a bit over-bearing sometimes and maybe a bit pushy, but they don't mean anything by it. We just—like to joke around a lot."

Hiccup smiled and gave his hand a tiny squeeze "It's okay. I mean, you've met my family; you now know the definition of over-bearing and pushy."

"So, you're ready then?" She nodded and then Jack opened the front door. He heard some conversation just as it creaked open, then all voices silenced once the squeaking of the door had travelled throughout the house. Well, that was a good sign—

He led Hiccup into the living room, where, sure enough, his whole family was gathered and looking at the two of them expectantly. Eyes trailed down to their joined hands and he noticed some smiles forming "Okay" Jack sighed as they stopped in the center of the room "everyone, this is Hiccup. Hiccup, that's my mom and dad and my sisters, Anna and Emma." He gestured to everyone accordingly.

"Hi." Hiccup half-smiled and waved at them "It's, uh, nice to meet all of you." Aw, she was nervous.

Then Anna got out of her seat and it was Jack's turn to get anxious. The dark skinned girl looked at Hiccup curiously as she approached her. Hiccup's smile went away and it was replaced with a confused expression. The next thing Jack knew, his sister's manicured fingers found their way into Hiccup's mouth and she was poking around with curiosity "Braces..." He heard her murmur to herself "looks like you're taking really good care of them, at least. And maybe they'll come off soon because—"

"Anna," Jack interrupted "can you please get your fingers out of her mouth?"

"Oh!" She immediately retracted her hands and Hiccup started moving her mouth to make herself comfortable again "Sorry, I couldn't help myself." Hiccup just blinked and looked for someone to give an explanation. Anna noticed and carried on "I'm studying to become a dentist, so I'm maybe a little obsessed with people's teeth..."

"A little?" Jack joked.

Anna scoffed "At least I'm passionate about what I wanna do; unlike some people who don't even have a clue yet."

"I've got time!" Jack defended.

"I can see why Jack likes you, Hiccup." His father claimed.

Then his mother chimed in "Yeah, you're so pretty."

Jack and Hiccup both blushed and Hiccup looked down "Th-thank you."

"Are you having dinner with us?" Emma questioned.

Hiccup nodded "Uh-huh. What are we having?"

"Oh, nothing special." Mary shrugged "Just pasta."

Hiccup smiled, like she was silently approving of the meal choice. Then the awkward silence came back and Jack coughed "So, uh, we'll just be up in my room until dinner's out; I wanted to show Hiccup the Play Station." Then, he led her towards the stairs.

"Doors stay open, got it?" Charles added with a serious tone.

Jack blushed and gripped Hiccup's hand a little tighter "Yeah, yeah, I got it." He heard his father trying and failing to muffle his chuckling, which only made him blush more. Yeesh, it was like the guy put a cap on his sense of humor until he got home and then it just spilled everywhere to his heart's content.

Jack hoped that the pink tint that he knew was on his face had faded a little by the time he brought Hiccup into his room, leaving the door wide open as requested. It clearly hadn't gone away, but he was comforted to see the same color dusting over the brunette's freckles and making them harder to see "I'm really sorry about that." He started, letting go of her hand to nervously pace around the room "My dad and I... we kinda have the same sense of humor..."

"It's fine..." She nervously assured him "I mean, my dad terrorized you. It's only fair."

"Hiccup, my dad isn't a giant, overprotective mountain with a beard and wants to kill me."

"I think you're exaggerating just a little. He does not want to kill you. He just wants to... make you think twice about doing anything stupid, that's all."

"He's still pretty intimidating if you ask me. I mean, maybe if I had super powers I would feel a bit better."

"Really?" Hiccup sat down on the edge of his bed "What kind of powers would you want?"

"I would love to be able to control snow." He claimed "Ya know, to make my own snowman army, keep the ice thick when my sisters and I go ice skating, maybe start a snow cone business."

"You've got it all planned out, huh?"

"Yeah!" He sat down next to her "What powers would you want?"

Hiccup looked like she was going to answer, but another voice cut her off "To talk to animals."

Jack groaned at his sister leaning in the doorway "Anna, what do you want?"

"What?" She innocently asked, coming farther into the room "I can't talk to my little brother's girlfriend and get to know her a little better?"

"Can't you interview her at dinner?"

"No, Mom and Dad'll have free reign over that interview. I need one of my own." She sat down in Jack's desk chair. It was then that he noticed that Anna's parakeet was sitting on her shoulder contently "So Hiccup, Jack hasn't really seen you around until recently; did you just move in around here?"

"No. I kinda got tired of spending time after classes in the school library, too noisy and too many people asking me and one of my friends for help on homework. So I went to the library Jack works at and... yeah..."

"So you've lived here your whole life?"

"Yeah; we haven't moved once since I was born. Jack tells me you guys moved a lot, though."

"All the time." The colorful college student sighed "Sometimes two or three times a year. I think the longest we were anywhere until we put down roots here was Brazil. We were there maybe... two years? Australia's a close second, though."

"Wow, I should let your parents and my mom compare notes."

"She travels too?"

"She used to." Hiccup affirmed "When she was younger, she went everywhere she could get. Always went with an old boyfriend of hers; they're actually still friends."

"I bet between the two of them, your parents and ours could fill in the whole map." The girls shared a giggle and Jack shook his head. He should have known the night would go sort of like this.

* * *

><p>Anna kept Hiccup talking all the way until Charles came up and announced rather flamboyantly that dinner was now being served (yes, he worded it like that) and the three of them followed him back downstairs.<p>

To Jack's surprise, the dining room table was set for once. Normally, the Overlands had everything sitting in the pots they were cooked in on top of the counter and everyone just grabbed a plate from the cabinet and treated it like a buffet. All of a sudden Hiccup came over and it was like Christmas dinner all over again, if spaghetti and meatballs could ever count as Christmas dinner. The plates were already set up with utensils and glasses for drinks, which was almost unheard of at the Overlands' except for special occasions. Emma and Mary were already seated and had their plates filled with as much pasta as they could eat.

"Come on, help yourselves." Mary insisted.

"Don't mind if I do." Charles snatched up the plate next to his wife's and started spooning spaghetti into it while Jack, Hiccup, and Anna took the three remaining seats. Jack's father put down his plate and dipped the serving spoon back into the bowl "How much 'ya want, Henrika- sorry, Hiccup."

"Oh, uh... you don't have to."

"I'm dishing the stuff out anyway."

"... True." She watched him put food on her plate and told him to stop after just one big scoop "Thank you."

"No problem." He replied "Jack, Anna?" The siblings both nodded and they each got their helping as well.

* * *

><p>Surprisingly, dinner didn't go quite as bad as Jack had expected it to. His parents started out with generic questions, like how old Hiccup was and where she went to school. Jack had already told them that, but he guessed that they had to hear it from her again for some reason. Anna interjected a few questions about her braces and Hiccup answered them without a second thought, now knowing that the older girl was going into dentistry. Emma thought up a few innocent ones of her own, like if she had any pets and what video games she liked to play. And, for that portion of the interview, as it had apparently been dubbed, Jack thought that was going to go great.<p>

Then, his parents moved on to more personal territory. They started asking Hiccup if she'd dated before, what it was that she liked about him (she said his eyes, which made him happier than it should have), and then Jack's mother asked the question "Are you sure you can handle my son?"

And, whatever that was supposed to mean, Jack didn't wanna know. His dad almost choked on what was in his mouth when she asked, clearly taking it down the same road that Jack had. Hiccup definitely handled it better than either of them had by just looking down and saying she'd rather not answer that question. Thank God, she handled that so well. If her parents had asked him that, Jack would have probably exploded, like he was trying not to do right then.

After that, it was mostly just an awkward few minutes before everyone was done eating and no one had any more questions to ask Hiccup. So, he decided that she'd been through enough torture and opted to take her home. When Hiccup didn't reject the offer, she said her good-byes before the pair hopped in Jack's car and headed back to her house. The ride there was just as awkward as the other ones of that evening, and rightfully so after the falters that occurred. Regardless, Jack walked her up to the front door again, like had become a bit of a habit for him to do when he dropped her off.

"Okay, so..." Jack began, regaining Hiccup's attention "how about we scratch my house off the list of places to go on dates?"

"Only if mine goes off the list too." She replied.

"Okay." He chuckled "No more at-home-dates. Deal?"

"Deal." It got quiet again "So, uh," Hiccup murmured "that means you wanna go out again?"

"Well, yeah, why wouldn't I?" He confirmed, inching closer before something crossed his mind and he backed off "Wait, do you not want to anymore?"

"No, I want to keep going out too. I just... so that means we're dating now?"

"I guess it does." He shrugged "And then that makes us... boyfriend and girlfriend, right?"

Hiccup giggled and nodded "As long as I get to be the girlfriend~." She playfully remarked.

He chuckled at that "Deal." He pulled her into a final embrace, just like he had the last time they went out. He whispered a "good night" in her ear and she hummed one back in return, relaxing in his grip. They parted after a few minutes and then Hiccup went inside, flashing Jack a metal-filled smile over her shoulder before the door shut behind her in time to keep the oncoming Great Dane within the threshold. Toothless' barking continued for a short while until Hiccup quieted the dog down.

Jack slowly went back in his car and pulled out of the driveway, looking at the Haddock household one last time before bidding it farewell until the next date. His eyes shot back to the road when he saw Hiccup's brother giving him a death glare from one of the windows, making a motion with his hands to say "I'm watching you." At that, he gulped and drove off. How Hiccup just happened to live with two of the scariest looking guys he'd ever met, Jack would never know. But it was clear that neither one would be off his back any time soon.

19. Strive to Settle

****Hey, I'm not dead!****

****So, uh, this is more of a filler chapter to lead up to what's gonna happen next... so sorry about the long wait to only be over that. College is killing me; I'm always writing papers and stuff now so the last thing I want to do is write even more when those are done. Ugh...****

****Also, this one is Jack-centric since the last one turned out to be quite Hiccup-centric, so I'm balancing that out a bit... I hope this is okay.****

*** * ***

><p>"I had a really good time, Jack."<p>

"Me too." He confirmed as he walked Hiccup to her front door, like he always did, hand in hand "I didn't expect to enjoy that as much as I did."

"Sometimes kids' movies can surprise you, ya know?"

Jack just sniggered in response "I could see the plot twist coming a mile away, though." When Hiccup suggested that they go see the new animated movie that was out (one he admittedly wanted to see anyway) he didn't think that she was being serious. Seeing a movie made for kids with your girlfriend wasn't exactly romantic. But, hey, they both had a good time. That was what really mattered.

Hiccup pulled at her jacket so that it was closer to her neck, in an effort to keep warm in the frigid January air "Yeah, but it could have been more obvious than it was, right?"

"I guess." He let go of her hand and looked at the door. Neither one of them seemed to mind the cold that much, but Hiccup's face was starting to turn red from the icy winds drifting between them. He let out a breath through his mouth and watched the steam from it dissolve in front of him "So, see you Monday?"

The brunette nodded "See you Monday."

They hugged goodbye and Jack gave her a quick peck on the cheek, something else that was added to their little after-date ritual. Hiccup opened the door and Jack started back for his car, but then another voice called him "Hey, Jack!" He froze when he realized that it was Scott. He held in a groan. Great. What'd I do now?_

The teen in question emerged from the house wearing nothing but boots, his boxers, and a sweat-stained tank top, looking the taller but weaker teen over with his best poker face yet "Got a minute?"

"Guess I do now." Jack sighed "What is it?"

"I know you're afraid of me."

The pale boy sputtered "I am not."

"You should be." Scott declared "But, since my sister likes you so much," He said that last part as if he was teasing them both "I'm willing to call a little truce between you and I."

Jack looked at him quizzically "What's the catch?"

"Simple." Scott lifted his chin to make up for the inch Jack had on him, staring him in the eye "Tomorrow I'm meeting up with my buddies at the gym. I told them I'm bringing you with me."

Oh no. Oh no. Jack didn't like where this was going!

"So meet me up at the gym on the corner of Berkly and Hooligan. Nine A.M. Sharp. If you don't show, well," He took a step back and smirked "just see what happens the next time you come to pick up my baby sister."

"â€| What if I have to work tomorrow morningâ€|?" Jack weakly argued.

"What kind of library is open on a Saturday?!"

"Um, a lot of them."

Scott huffed "Ugh, whatever. Just be there."

He trudged back in the house and all but slammed the front door. It was clear that even Scott was doing this against his own will, probably because Hiccup told him to back off or something. (Not that she needed to, of course. Jack could surely handle himself if he and Scott ever got into a fight. Not like the other guy would snap his limbs like twigs or anything.) The thought of that alone made Jack feel a little bit better about the situation. But still, being at the gym with Hiccup's big brother for who-knows-how-long was a daunting to him.

Oh well, his fate for tomorrow was clearly sealed. As Jack climbed in his car and drove back home, he thought that he should probably do a lot of push-ups before he went to bed, as if that would prepare him for the day ahead of him.

* * *

><p>Jack pulled up to the gray concrete building that had to be Scott's gym late. Only by ten minutes, but he was still late. But it wasn't the clock on his dashboard that told him, oh no, it was an irritated Haddock that told him so with a bite in his voice.

Scott was leaning against the wall when Jack parked his car and stepped out, who immediately greeted him with a "you're late" before pushing off and striding towards him in, yet again, shorts and a tank top. Seriously, did this guy never get cold? Sure, Jack loved when the air got chilly but he didn't want to risk hypothermia when he went outside. Inside, though boxers and a t-shirt, baby.

He made some excuse about there being a bit of traffic on the way here, which Scott just ignored with an eye roll that reminded Jack of Hiccup in an odd way "Whatever. Just come inside."

Scott wandered towards the front doors while Jack slowly followed, surveying the area and the building's exterior one last time. The sign read "Bludvist's" Jack noticed before the pair walked inside and Jack was hit with the over-powering smells of energy drinks, sweat, and a brew of different colognes.

"Welcome to my world, Jack." Scott bragged as he spread his arms open, as if gesturing to the entire establishment as his property "You may have heard of No Man's Land, but this is All Man's Land." He paused to look around before adding on "Well, except for the kickass ladies who work out here too; they're awesome though, so it's totally cool. Come on, I'll show you around and introduce you."

Then, he scampered over to the counter to check himself in or something. All Jack could think of to do was follow him, so he did just that only to wish he hadn't when he saw the guy Scott was chatting with.

This guy had to be the size of Hiccup's dad. If not, bigger. The man had dark skin and a scary face decorated with an aged scar

spanning half of his head, turning his otherwise (assumedly) harmless grin into something much more sinister. Long dreadlocks cascaded around his scarred, beaten body andâ€¦ was that a prosthetic arm?

Jack wanted to run. He wanted to bolt back out to his car, drive back home, and forget this whole ordeal. Who cared if Scott didn't lay off, right? He'd probably get tired of screwing with him eventuallyâ€¦ right?!

"Friend of yours, Scott?" He practically growled.

"Eh, not really." Scott remarked, like it was nothing at all "He and I just have some business to take care of here is all."

"Rightâ€¦" The man didn't take his eyes off Jack for another few seconds, like he was trying to figure out why he was there to begin with.

"Are the guys here?" Scott questioned.

"I thought I saw them go down to the boxing ring a bit ago. Got tired of waiting for ya up here, I would imagine."

Scott tapped the counter before walking off "Thanks, man." Under the stranger's suspicious gaze, Jack stayed closer to Hiccup's brother than he ever had before, though he looked at the ground more than anything else "Drago runs the place." Then, Jack's head lifted "He's not really used to seeing bodies like you hanging around here; that's why he was lookin' at you funny."

"O-ohâ€¦" Jack could have sworn he heard his voice crack just then.

Scott led him down a flight of stairs not far from the counter, sneakers squeaking with every step until they touched a floor that was almost completely padded. Punching bags and exercise machines lined the walls and a boxing ring took up the rest of the space.

"Oh yeah," Scott piped "you've never met my friends, have you? I guess we're gonna fix that in a few seconds."

He was meeting this guy's friends too? Great, just great. More people that could probably kill him.

Scott strode up to a group of guys near the boxing ring nonchalantly, Jack close behind. He stopped when he reached them and juted his thumb over his shoulder "Guys, this is the fresh meat I was telling you all about, Jack."

"Wait, wait, wait." A tall boy with toned, dark skin and black dreadlocks pulled back into a ponytail stepped forward, sneakers squeaking against the hardwood as he did so "Which new piece of meat? You had like three lined up last time I checked."

Scott groaned "Right, you were at that tournamentâ€¦ sorry, man, forgot to get you up to speed." He pushed Jack towards his friends "This is my sister's boyfriend" He said the last word with a bit of venom in his voice "and she's getting on my case about getting along with him so I brought him here on a field trip. He's gonna be hanging

out with us for the day and, if he survives, I'll listen to her."

"Oh okay." The teen with the dreadlocks nodded as he began to wrap what looked like gauze around his hands and wrists.

"Anyway," Scott continued "Jack, you've met Speedifist" he gestured to the dark-skinned boy "and that's Wartihog," he motioned to a rounder boy with curly red hair and a few warts dotting his face "I think you know Derek already, and the lazy ass sitting on the edge of the ring is Terrence." He said the last introduction louder than all the others.

"Geez, we were just waiting on you." A lanky teen with long blond hair tied into a braid drawled as he started climbing into the boxing ring.

"You could have at least warmed up while we were waiting, though man." Speedifist berated before he started wailing on a punching bag a few yards from the ring "I'm all fired up and now I gotta wait on you!?"

"Dude, I stretch before I even get in here." Terrence groaned as he rolled his shoulder "I'm good to go whenever you are." With that, he slipped between the ropes that sealed in the ring and started putting on protective padding?

With one final punch to the bag, Speedifist breathed "Good. Because I'm ready to punch your skinny ass to the moon." He threw on a pair of boxing gloves and jumped into the ring, standing square in front of Terrence, now fully padded, and throwing a few practice punches at the air.

"Just go easy on him, Spence!" Derek called "Macy'll have your head if you do any permanent damage."

"Relax," the boxer waved off "when I'm done with him, Mace'll have more than enough of him to entertain herself." Without another word, he started punching and throwing combinations at a surprisingly sturdy Terrence.

There was about thirty seconds of silence between them before someone spoke "Come on, man!" Terrence goaded "I can barely feel those; I wanna see some stars!" Speedifist's punches became quicker and more violent, indicated by Terrence's decreased stability after each one "Yeah! That's what I'm talkin' about!"

Jack did his best not to cringe as Terrence finally started letting out grunts in response to Speedifist's assaults. That guy could take a punch, he'd give him that much.

"So, Jack," Derek leaned on Scott's shoulder as he eyed Jack up and down "you do any lifting?"

Scott visibly gagged "Yeesh, dude, mints, have you ever heard of 'em?" He pushed his friend off of him.

"Your sister don't call me 'Dog's Breath' for nothing, pal." The tallest of the group countered "Gotta make sure I'm still worthy of the title."

"Trust me, you are." Scott coughed and grumbled about it being "disgusting" under his breath.

The attention of the remaining boys turned back to Jack "Uhâ€| noâ€|" He weakly responded "I-I just do, uh, cardio for the most part."

Derek just nodded in response.

"Wait, why does that even matter?" Wartihog questioned "I thought he was doing whatever we were doing today."

"I just wanna see what we're dealing with is all." Derek reasoned "At least he does _something_, right? He's not a total wimp."

"Are we gonna do this or not?!" Scott complained.

A thud was heard behind them and the small party turned to see Terrence on the ground and Speedifist was jumping around and celebrating his victory "Fuck yes!" He cheered "Seein' stars yet, man?!"

Terrence groaned and sat up, holding his head in his hands "Just a fewâ€|"

"You wanna go again when you can see straight again?" Speedifist questioned with a smirk.

"Oh, you bet I do!" Terrence stood with a wobble and leaned against the ropes to support himself "My _sister_ can do better than that."

"Then why don't you put on some gloves next time and we'll really go at it?" Speedifist taunted.

"You're on!"

Jack saw Derek roll his eyes and start heading for the stairs "Yeah, okay, let's get out of here, let them beat each other into a pair of messes in the ring." Scott and Wartihog started following him before Jack caught the hint "We'll pick up their corpses on our way out."

The quartet scaled the stairs back up to the main floor of the gym and swung the corner, heading down an aisle of exercise machines. Scott and Derek immediately started greeting the sparse people occupying the machines with fist bumps or simple waves. Wartihog did the same with a few people, but he slinked behind the two of them and strode alongside Jack.

"So, you're dating Henrika, eh?" The redhead mused. Jack just nodded in response "What's it like bein' with her?"

"Uh, it's good. Really good."

Wartihog hummed and nodded "Bet it is, considering you're basically the only guy she hasn't friend-zoned to date."

Salt and pepper eyebrows rose at the statement "Butâ€| she's dated

beforeâ€| "

The older boy shrugged "Doesn't mean anything. One time a guy confessed he liked her and got instantly shut down. Another one tried to go a step farther and she turned him away like nothing." He paused, like he was trying to figure out what to say next when Jack stayed silent "I'm just saying you must be something special or you're just lucky you just haven't pushed the wrong button yet."

"Oâ€| kay thenâ€| "

"Yooo, Dagur!" Scott's voice resounded. Jack and Wartihog looked up to see Scott high-fiveing someone on a treadmill before continuing on his way. He was probably just another one of the friends that the older Haddock had made by coming to this place, but it was clear Scott was more vocal towards him than anyone else.

"Oh yeah," Derek looked back at Jack and Wartihog "it's leg day, guys."

While Wartihog hissed under his breath, Jack just looked at the others confused "Leg day?"

"We're working out our legs today." Scott drawled on "Grab a treadmill and start running." He and Derek jumped onto adjacent machines and started them up. Jack and Wartihog followed their lead. Onlyâ€| Jack didn't know how to start up the machine.

Jack stared at the control panel on the treadmill and wound up just pressing buttons that looked important until the machine turned on and from there it was easy enough. He increased the speed of the treadmill until he was jogging and then looked around. Scott and Derek were each had theirs set on an incline as they ran, meanwhile Wartihog was jogging like he was.

The four of them were exercising in silence for quite a while until Scott challenged Derek "Hey, bet I can sprint faster than you."

"Bro, you may be stronger than I am but I got more stamina."

"This isn't a video game!" The other retorted "Come on, me and you."

Derek just rolled his eyes and agreed and then the two were running faster within seconds of playing with the control panels.

"Quite a bromance, huh?" Wartihog commented "I swear, if Scott wasn't into that girl in his class, the two of them would have started dating a _long_ time ago."

Jack quietly pondered the notion and, now that it was pointed out to him, Scott and Derek did kind of behave the same as he and Hiccup did sometimes. Like when they went to the arcadeâ€| He and Wartihog watched the two of them sprint for a good fifteen minutes before Scott started showing some wear, but he didn't slow down.

Derek noticed his more labored breathing and playfully nudged him, throwing the smaller boy off-balance for a fraction of a second. That

little stumble was enough to make Scott scramble for the sidebars to regain his composure while Derek just laughed at the pathetic display. Scott growled and threw a punch to the other's arm, grumbling about how "that was cheating" to deaf ears. Jack and Wartihog both started laughing, only to hear Scott screech "It's not funny!"

"I think it's funny." Derek chuckled. Then, he noticed something near the front of the gym "Oh, hey Ru-"

"Hey, Snotnut!" A gruff voice bellowed.

Derek was immediately silenced "Nevermindâ€¦!"

A few seconds later, a girl who looked a lot like Terrence with longer hair stormed through the room and made her way to Scott "Where the hell's my brother?"

"He and Speedifist should still be beating the shit out of each other." He stated plainly "What'd he do now?"

The blonde's cheeks turned a little pink before she answered "He did the laundry today and he shrank half of my bras."

It took a few seconds for him to register what she'd just said, but once he did Scott burst out laughing. While he and Wartihog just laughed as she rampaged down to the boxing ring, Derek was at least nice enough to wait until she was out of earshot before he started losing it.

Jack held in a chuckle all the while and took notice when Scott turned off his machine and stepped off the treadmill "I kinda wanna see this."

"Ya know," Wartihog jumped off of his and _then_ turned it off "me too."

"Looks like we're taking a field trip thenâ€¦!" Derek sighed before he followed suit.

Jack did the same and followed the trio back downstairs, where he could hear two people shouting but couldn't make out the argument. When they reached the bottom, he could see Speedifist and Terrence still going at each other in the ring and that girl standing just outside the ropes.

"You could at least give me money to buy new ones!" She yelled.

"Can't we talk about this later?!" Terrence screamed back "Can't you see I'm busy?!" He threw another punch at Speedifist before dodging a low blow.

"You could at least say you're sorry!"

Derek leaned closer to Jack and stated "That's Terrence's sister Ruth. This is why some people call them Ruff and Tuff, cause they always fight each other."

"Why do _I_ have to apologize?!" Terrence rebutted after dodging a

punch aimed at his head "_You_ left everything in the machine!"

"You could have hung them up or something, shithead!"

Terrence broke from the fight in favor of leaning over the ropes and getting in his sister's face "Bitch!"

"Butt elf!"

"Bride of Grendel!"

Ruth's eyes momentarily widened before her hard glare returned to match her brother's. The two were caught in a staring contest before Ruth voiced "Wanna take this in the ring?"

"You bet I do." Terrence heatedly replied.

"Heeere we goâ€|" Speedifist sighed as he jumped out of the ring and removed his helmet and gloves. When they were off, he tossed them over to Ruth, who immediately began putting them on. She then discarded her jacket and bag before sliding into the ring and throwing a punch at her brother's side.

"Hey, foul! Foul!"

Wartihog and Derek started cheering the sparring twins on while Scott rolled his eyesâ€| and throwing moves that _had_ to be illegal in actual boxing, in Jack's amateur opinion.

After a minute or two of watching the fight, Scott slinked closer to Speedifist "So, you know it's leg day right?"

"Yeah." Dreadlocks spilled from his ponytail before they were put back in a tighter hold "Sorry, Tuff and I got carried away."

"As usual." Scott scoffed "Come on, let's get to it." They walked past Jack "Jack, come on!"

He blindly followed them back up the stairs and over to new machines Jack hadn't seen before. And, frankly, Jack had no idea how these things were supposed to be used. To him, it just looked like a weird looking chair with a panel or something in front of it.

Scott climbed into one without a problem and put his feet on the panel while Speedifist loaded weights onto the other side "You wanted a hundred, right?"

"One ten." The other corrected.

"You got it." The boxer put the correct amount of weight on it and then looked at Jack "How much you want, Jack?"

"Uh, what?"

"Get your ass in that chair; you're doing everything I'm doing." Scott asserted and then began to extend his legs to their limit and curling back up again, repeating the process over and over again.

Jack sighed and set himself up in the adjacent machine like Scott

had. Not a second later, Speedifist was poking at him again "How much?"

"Uhâ€¦"

"Give him fifty to start." Scott ordered with a grunt.

Speedifist obliged without another wordâ€¦ and that's when Jack realized that this was harder than it looked. He started pumping his legs up and down and wanted to quit after only doing it five times.

He paused to catch a breath and Scott took it upon himself to be Jack's new coach for the day "Keep going! Go until those twig legs threaten to snap!"

"They might be now."

"Don't be such a baby; that's like nothing."

"Maybe for youâ€¦"

"Them's fightin' words!" Speedifist taunted, now a few yards away from them jumping rope.

"You shut up!" Scott yelled.

"What?" The darker teen questioned "I thought you'd like going against your sister's little boy toy in the ring."

Jack's legs faltered and he blushed up to his ears, causing both of the other boys to burst into laughter "One thing's for sure" Scott breathed through laughs "his reactions are funny."

Ugh, this was gonna be a long dayâ€¦

* * *

><p>"Okay, just next time your brother decides to abduct me and torment me, could you give me a warning?" Jack grumbled as he lay motionless in his bed.<p>

After Scott had mercifully let him go home, Jack had a whole new adventure awaiting him. Because he had to drive his carâ€¦ all the way back homeâ€¦ and his legs and arms were sore from exertion they weren't used to. After a good fifteen minutes of tentatively hitting the gas and doing his best to stay on the road, he sloppily parked in the driveway, shuffled into the house, and promptly plopped down on the couch where he refused to move a muscle for a few hours. Eventually, Emma pulled him upstairs to ask for help with her weekend homework and he'd stayed on the second floor ever since.

"I'm sorry; it's actually kinda my fault." Hiccup sighed before continuing "I told Scott that I wanted him to be a little nicer to you and that's the path he decided to take."

Jack just groaned on the other end "So this is your faultâ€¦ and I can't even get mad at youâ€¦"

"You can," She stated "you probably just don't want

to."

"Bingo!"

"If you want, I can come over there and hang out with you if that'll make you feel better."

"Nah, I've got work tomorrow." Jack whined again "Harry's gonna make me rearrange the whole library with my luck."

"Ooh, poor baby." Hiccup sarcastically cooed.

They shared a chuckle before Jack remembered what Wartihog had said to him earlier. He wondered "Hey, Hiccup?"

"Hmm?"

"So, uh, one of your brother's friends told me something and I kind of wanna know if he was being serious or not?"

"Here we go!" She breathed "what happened?"

"Is it true that you like to friend-zone people that like you?"

The other line was dead silent for almost a minute. Jack was going to pipe up and ask if she was still there until he heard her grumble "I'm gonna fucking kill him!"

"Uh, Hiccup?"

He heard a little gasp "Oh, not you, not you! Just those idiots always blow everything out of proportion." Then, he could hear some anger in her voice "Ok, sure, I didn't feel the same way about someone but still wanted to be his friend and now I'm the bad guy, right?"

"No," Jack interjected "that's now why I... I just wanted to hear your side or if it was just made up."

"It wasn't made up but it was twisted." She'd calmed down some, but Hiccup still sounded irritated "I'm sorry about the outburst."

"Don't apologize." He commented "I'm sorry it happened."

"I'm gonna kill my brother!" Hiccup muttered.

"Scott didn't tell me that." Jack informed "It was his friend, uh Wartihog something?"

"Okay, then I'm gonna kill Wartihog." She corrected.

He let out another laugh "Please don't kill anyone, Hiccup."

The brunette giggled "Fine, only 'cause you asked."

They fell into a comfortable silence afterwards and, even though they didn't talk for several minutes, Jack didn't want to hang up.

"Hey, Jack!" Hiccup whispered, as if she'd ruin the moment if she

spoke louder "when do you wanna get together again, anyway?"

"Oh, right! Umâ€|" Jack's eyes scanned over his bedroom "How about Saturday? My parents are going out to dinner, so maybe we can watch a movie or something in peace?"

"Hmmmâ€|" She paused "Okay. You'll come pick me up?"

"You got it."

There was a distant slamming door on Hiccup's end "Sounds like Scott's home."

The older teen smirked "I take it you still wanna go have a talk with him?"

"Yeah, sure, a talkâ€|" The younger absently agreed "Feel better, Jack. See you Monday."

"Okay. Good night."

"Night."

20. Cinema Smooches

***Throws glitter* I'm not dead~! College sucked away time and motivation.**

* * *

><p>"Now, remember, Emma's over her friend's for the night." Mary reminded as she threw on her coat.<p>

"Uh huh."

"And Anna said that she won't be back home until after midnight." Charles added before grabbing the keys.

"Got it."

"We'll be back around eleven."

"You told me."

Mary stepped out the door and Charles gripped the knob before looking at his son "Have fun tonight." He looked outside and back before adding with a snigger "Just not too much, got it?"

The youngest Overland felt his cheeks get warmer "Yeah, got it. Same for you."

His father laughed "Okay, see ya later kid." The front door clicked shut as he left and not five seconds later the house's only occupant turned the lock.

Finally! Jack internally cheered_ Finally I got the house to myself!_

That was his first thought when he had securely locked the front door

behind his parents. The weekend was finally here and he had another date with Hiccup in about an hour.

Only this time it was gonna be just a little bit different.

This upcoming date was going to be one that he'd been wanting to have with his girlfriend since they first started dating a month ago. It wasn't that having a nice movie night snuggling on the couch was too hard to put together or anything, it was the fact thatâ€¦ their homes had kind of been crossed off of the "places we can have dates at" list. That, however, changed when it would just be the two of them.

With no parents or dogs or overprotective older brothers around to ruin the date for him, Jack's plan was finally possible. He could finally get a night of privacy with Hiccup, a date with enough isolation and time for him to take another step without fear of making himself look like a complete fool.

He was determined. He knew that tonight would be the night that he would have his first real kiss with Hiccup. It would be at the perfect moment, in the dim lighting of their own personal movie theater, and completely immune to being interrupted by any outside forceâ€¦ except maybe a hurricane or something, but that wasn't exactly likely to happen.

That moment was going to happen. Now he just had to prepare himself and the house for the night. So he immediately set himself to work in the living room, grabbing the blankets off of the backs of the couches and throwing them around his shoulders. He crouched down and shuffled through the DVDs in the entertainment center and found a few titles that the two of them might be able to agree on watching, but nothing that really caught his eye.

Dissatisfied with the turnout he had, Jack decided to continue his search in the movie and gaming central command that was the basement. He swung the corner into the kitchen and descended into the finished space below. He could tell that he'd have more luck with the collection down here just by looking at what was on display in the front: some of his and Emma's favorite animated movies, full season collections of Star Trek, and of course the selection Netflix gave him on his Playstation. Yep, this would work.

He spent a good twenty minutes sifting through the whole collection of DVDs (he even found a few VHS tapes in the back that he'd forgotten they even owned) and picking out a reasonable pile of films that he thought would be good choices. Jack just thanked his lucky stars that Hiccup didn't like romantic comedies like Anna and his mom seemed to; this idea would have been a terrible one if that were the case. So, instead of boring romance movies, Jack had choices of adventure, sci-fi, horror, action, and more adorning the coffee table.

The next thing he had to do was set the mood in the room better. Sure, the blankets were cozy, but he definitely needed a mountain of pillows for himself and Hiccup to snuggle into. So that idea turned into a barefoot teenage boy sprinting around the upper floors of the house and snatching all the pillows he could get away with stealing for the night and being too lazy to put back until the next day. Simple enough. He nearly missed a step on his way back downstairs,

but Jack now had plenty of things to help get himself and Hiccup comfortable for the evening.

Then Jack made sure that everything was hooked up right (since Emma liked to unplug random things to mess with him) and left the TV on with the DVD player's company logo moving about the screen when he ascended the stairs yet again.

Next was clothes, since Jack decided that a stained t-shirt and sweatpants wouldn't help the mood that he was trying to create. He had to look at least sort of decent for this, right? Gotta make it memorable!

Once he was changed, he locked up the rest of the house and then climbed into his car to pick up Hiccup. After he took care of that and brought her back for their movie night, all Jack had to do was work up the courage to make his move.

* * *

><p>"Oh come on- Fuck, fuck, FUCK!" Scott shouted as Derek's character K.O'd his character.<p>

The older boy just smirked and tried to hold in a laugh "Told ya it wasn't just dumb luck, Snot Face." He goaded on.

"I demand a re-match!" The younger shouted as he stared in disbelief at the screen.

"Yeah, I'm sure you'll beat him this time, bro." Hiccup commented without much interest "He's only kicked your ass three times in a row now."

"If you think I suck so bad, why don't you play him?!" Her brother taunted as he held out the controller.

"Because I have a date tonight and Jack's gonna be here any minute to pick me up, that's why."

"He can wait five minutes." Scott persisted "Come on, show Dog's Breath over here that Haddock's are still the dominant name in this game."

"I don't think I want to." She leaned back in her spot on the couch "Why don't you just earn that title back yourself?"

"Because he's cheating, that's why!" The shorter boy accused "And I know for a fact that you cheat too!"

Hiccup rolled her eyes "Whatever you say, Scottâ€|"

Toothless' bark reverberated throughout the house once the doorbell rang.

"That's probably Jack." Hiccup stood and started putting on her coat "Gotta go."

"Have fun with your boyfriend, Hiccup!" Scott jeered.

Hiccup didn't even flinch as she left the room and retorted "Thanks,

have fun with yours too."

She could hear Derek's laughter follow her out, along with a slap and the older teen going "ow." Ugh, boys were so sensitive sometimesâ€¦

Toothless was still barking and he was up on his hind legs scratching at the door when Hiccup called him "Come on bud, get down." He whimpered but didn't lower himself, so his human intervened by pulling on his collar to get him away from the door. Once he was released, Toothless kept barking "Toothless!" She snapped and the dog instantly quieted "Good boy."

She looked through the little window near the top of the door, just to make sure it was the person she was expecting standing on the front porch. Sure enough, it was Jack on the other side.

"Dad, he's here!" Hiccup shouted down the hall.

Stefan's voice echoed back her way "Alright! Be back by 10:30!"

"Okay!" The brunette turned her attention back to her dog, who was staring at her expectantly with his tail wagging and bumping into the wall "Okay bud, see you later." Then, she took her leave out into the nippy winter air.

"Hey." Jack greeted with a rosy-cheeked grin.

Hiccup closed the front door behind her as she stepped out "Hey."

"Ready to go?"

Hiccup nodded and Jack took the opportunity to wrap an arm around her shoulders as they walked to his car, only to part after he'd tagged along and opened the passenger side door for her. Then, he climbed in the driver's side and they were off.

The ride to the Overlands' was uneventful, just the two of them exchanging pleasantries and talking about their days thus far. Jack ranted for a little while about how his parents "refused to leave" for a while, as if they didn't trust him and all Hiccup could say in reply was that her parents would probably do the same thingâ€¦ and did when she and Scott started being left home alone for long periods of time.

Before they knew it, they were at their destination and Jack put the car in park and turned it off. Hiccup unbuckled herself and opened her door.

"No, stay in the car." The older teen all but whined.

The younger just looked back his way "I thought we were going in?"

"We areâ€¦" She wasn't sure if it was the cold causing the color to form on his cheeks or not "I just wanted to open the door for you."

"What is this; the 1950's?" Hiccup joked.

"Pleeaase?" Jack begged.

The brunette rolled her eyes and shut her door again "Fine, you win."

She had to giggle at the comically elated expression that came onto his face after that, and how Jack nearly fell flat on his back when he tripped on some ice in the driveway, just because of how stupid it was. But it was kind of endearing at the same time, Jack trying to act like a gentleman. It didn't suit him that well, but it was still kind of sweet and maybe even cute. But it was odd, almost out of character for him.

Jack's arm was around her again as they went for the front door and he unlocked it for them. The two discarded their boots and then went about removing their coats.

The house was dimly lit and much quieter than Hiccup remembered from the last time she was there. Of course, it was just her and Jack, but it seemed weird without all of the noise that came with her boyfriend's family filling the space. It wasn't ominous but it wasn't entirely comfortable either, as if something was missing.

"Wanna order a pizza?" He asked.

"Umâ€|" Hiccup half-smiled and pointed at the metal framing her teeth.

"Right, sorryâ€| what do you want then?" He hung his coat on a chair and Hiccup followed suit.

"What do you got laying around here?" She wondered.

"Uh," Jack ran his fingers through his hair and turned towards the kitchen "not much. Let's seeâ€|" Hiccup followed him once he flicked a switch and lights came on in his destination. Well, at least they'd be able to see each other better now.

Wow, heâ€| was actually dressed sort of nicely tonight. Well, he was only wearing a blue sweater and dark-washed skinny jeans, but that was a step up from his usual hoodie and pair of jeans that had clearly not been washed in over a month. Why the sudden change-?

He was definitely planning something, she knew it. Jack was trying harder than usual to impress her tonight for some reason, she just didn't know for sure why yetâ€|

Jack spoke as he looked through the cabinets "We got ramen, instant mac and cheese, cans of soup, and I'm pretty sure we have pizza rolls in the freezer." He closed the cabinet and turned back to her "Not much, I know, but Anna's supposed to be going shopping with my dad tomorrow to replenish the stockpile."

"Mmmmâ€|" The brunette pondered for a moment "ramen okay with you?"

"Yeah!" Jack grabbed two packets from the cabinet "Chicken flavor okay?"

"It's my favorite."

"Really?" He got out a pot and measuring cup "Same here!"

* * *

><p>Empty bowls of ramen discarded onto the coffee table and about halfway through their first movie, Jack was completely comfortable. Resting on pillows and buried under a blanket, it wasn't a surprise that he'd feel warm. But what gave him the most warmth was the feeling of Hiccup's body leaning against his, hear head resting on his chest while his arm was wrapped around her shoulders and his fingers absentmindedly stroking her hair in slow, gentle strokes. Somehow, his free hand and hers found themselves under the blanket and grasped one another. He wasn't sure when or how, but he supposed that didn't matter because of how amazing he felt.<p>

He could feel every breath that she took and every time she shifted even slightly, and he knew that she could feel the same from him. He could feel every time she laughed and the vibrations over him that appeared when she spoke and knew that she felt the same sensations that he did. It was almost hypnotizing, being close to her like this. Being able to feel even this small form of intimacy, which people at school claimed to be "first date moves," made Jack content. Just being able to feel her, to smell her, and be stimulated by nothing but a movie and her presence was enough for him. At least, for the moment.

Before he knew it, the ending credits rolled and Jack didn't want to get up to put in another disk. He didn't want to move at all, really. He just wanted to keep holding Hiccup, keep rubbing his thumb against her hand, and keep his arm around her for as long as he could. It just felt great to be this close to her. The girl's side seemed to mold perfectly with his and, judging from the lack of movement from her, Jack assumed that she didn't want to move either.

They stayed that way for a minute or two before Hiccup started to stir and looked up at him "You wanna put in another one?" Aww, she sounded like she was starting to fall asleep~.

He thought for a moment before answering "Nah, let the credits roll. I bet they feel a bit left out."

She giggled "You wouldn't think they'd be used to people pulling out the DVD when they show up? They're kind of like that friend you didn't invite to the party but they showed up anyway."

Jack chuckled "All they want is some appreciation. The people worked hard on this movie."

Hiccup shrugged "I guess." She paused "At least the music's not that bad."

"Yeah."

The two listened to the slow music playing when Jack made a realization. This was exactly the moment he was waiting for! It was perfect!

"Hey, Hiccup!" He took his hand out of hers and watched her look back up at him.

"Hmm?"

Jack traced his thumb along her jaw line before cupping her face. He smiled at her and started to lean forward, gently pressing his lips against hers. He felt Hiccup tense up for a fraction of a second before she relaxed and adjusted her position because he clearly didn't have the best aim in this situation.

After that, Jack wasn't sure what happened. One second, he was trying to prolong the kiss, since Hiccup wasn't objecting, and the next he felt a sharp pain on his lip and he pulled away to touch where the sting was coming from. It hurt, that was for sure, but he also found traces of blood on his fingertips when he looked down at them.

Hiccup's eyes widened and she gaped for a second "Oh my God, I can't believe that just- Ugh, I'm sorry Jack. I-I wasn't thinking of my braces and it just felt nice and" She turned red and darted her eyes away from him.

Wait a minute! Jack exhaled silently in relief. Oh man, for a second, he thought she bit him. But that didn't make the situation any better! only he could mess up on a kiss so badly that he cuts his lip on Hiccup's braces, unbelievable! Hiccup wasn't even looking at him anymore; she probably thinks it was her fault. No, no it wasn't. He got carried away, that was all!

He heard a cough and was pulled from his inner turmoil to find Hiccup was looking back at him with anxiety clear on her face "Sorry!"

Jack blinked "No, no! i-it's not your fault. Do! do you uh! wanna" he started fiddling with his hands "try that again?"

The freckled girl smiled "I'd like that."

The two got close again, resting their foreheads against each other before they attempted to kiss again. Thankfully, this time Jack's lips met Hiccup's without a problem. It was just a simple peck this time, but it was better than messing up and cutting yourself on your partner's braces again, right? Right. They rested their heads against the couch and stayed close enough for their breaths to mingle.

"Sorry I'm such an idiot." Jack whispered.

"I don't mind." Hiccup replied "Stupid's kinda cute on you."

Jack tilted his head up slightly and playfully nipped her nose "Good."

Hiccup's mouth flattened "Really?"

"What?" The older teen innocently asked.

The pair chuckled lightly and smiled at one another. Hiccup snuggled closer to him and rested her head on his chest "You're not Jack

Frost."

"I'm close enough."

"Mmm."

* * *

><p>Even when Jack dropped her off at her front door later that night, Hiccup still felt a little bad about Jack cutting his lip. She knew she'd be getting her braces off soon, but now it seemed like they couldn't come off soon enough. She sure hoped that didn't happen again before they do come off.<p>

She apologized again for what happened and Jack just assured her that it wasn't her fault like he had before. They parted ways after one more chaste kiss and a hug and Hiccup stepped inside grinning like an idiot.

Not five seconds after the door was shut behind her, Toothless came barreling down the stairs and practically knocked her off her feet with his greeting of jumping on her.

"Okay, okay, yes I'm home now." She did her best to calm the beast of a dog, but he excitedly followed her on her way into Stefan's den "I'm home, Dad."

The red-headed man was behind his personal bar making himself a drink when he looked up and acknowledged her with a smirk "I figured that out when Toothless ran down the stairs and started jumping."

"You never know," The brunette added to the joke "maybe he's just a terrible guard dog and just greeted a burglar to death."

"Maybe." He was quiet, so Hiccup turned to leave. "So, how'd it go?"

She stopped "â€| Huhâ€|?"

"How was your date?" He elaborated.

"Oh, ya know, it wasâ€| a date." Wow, really casual, Hiccup "Yep, it was just a normal, regular, nothing special date."

"Mhmmâ€|" Stefan nodded "Alright, you had your go, what happened tonight?"

Hiccup's shoulders fell and she cocked her head to the side "You're not gonna just let me go, are you?"

Her father huffed "Look, Henrika, I know that it's your business, but I don't want you to think that you have to hide things from me or your mother." He chuckled to himself "Or that I'll try to crack Jack's head open."

Hiccup awkwardly laughed with him for a few seconds before conversation turned back to her "Yeah, yeah, of courseâ€|"

"So, you want to tell me what you were smiling about when you walked in now?"

"Oh, nothing big. Just, uhâ€¦" Oh great, she could feel herself blushing again "he, he kissed me is all. Kinda awkward, but, uh, welcome and kindaâ€¦ niceâ€¦."

Stefan put a giant hand on her shoulder and smiled "Glad to hear that, then."

"Me too." They both turned around and saw Val behind them, hair pulled up in a messy ponytail and tablet in hand.

"Youu were there the whole time?" Hiccup wondered.

"No, just the last part." Her mother explained "I heard you two talking and I wanted to eavesdrop." Hiccup must have been making some kind of face, because she added on "I'm happy for you, though. Your first kiss!"

"Mooomm." Hiccup groaned.

Stefan patted his daughter's back "Alright, we've tortured you enough, you can go now."

Hiccup immediately started making her way upstairs "Good night."

"Good night." She heard her parents say in unison, the grins on their faces and the looks they were surely giving each other clear in their voices.

End
file.